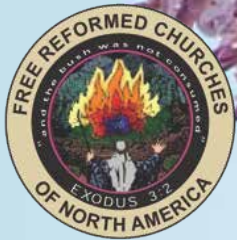
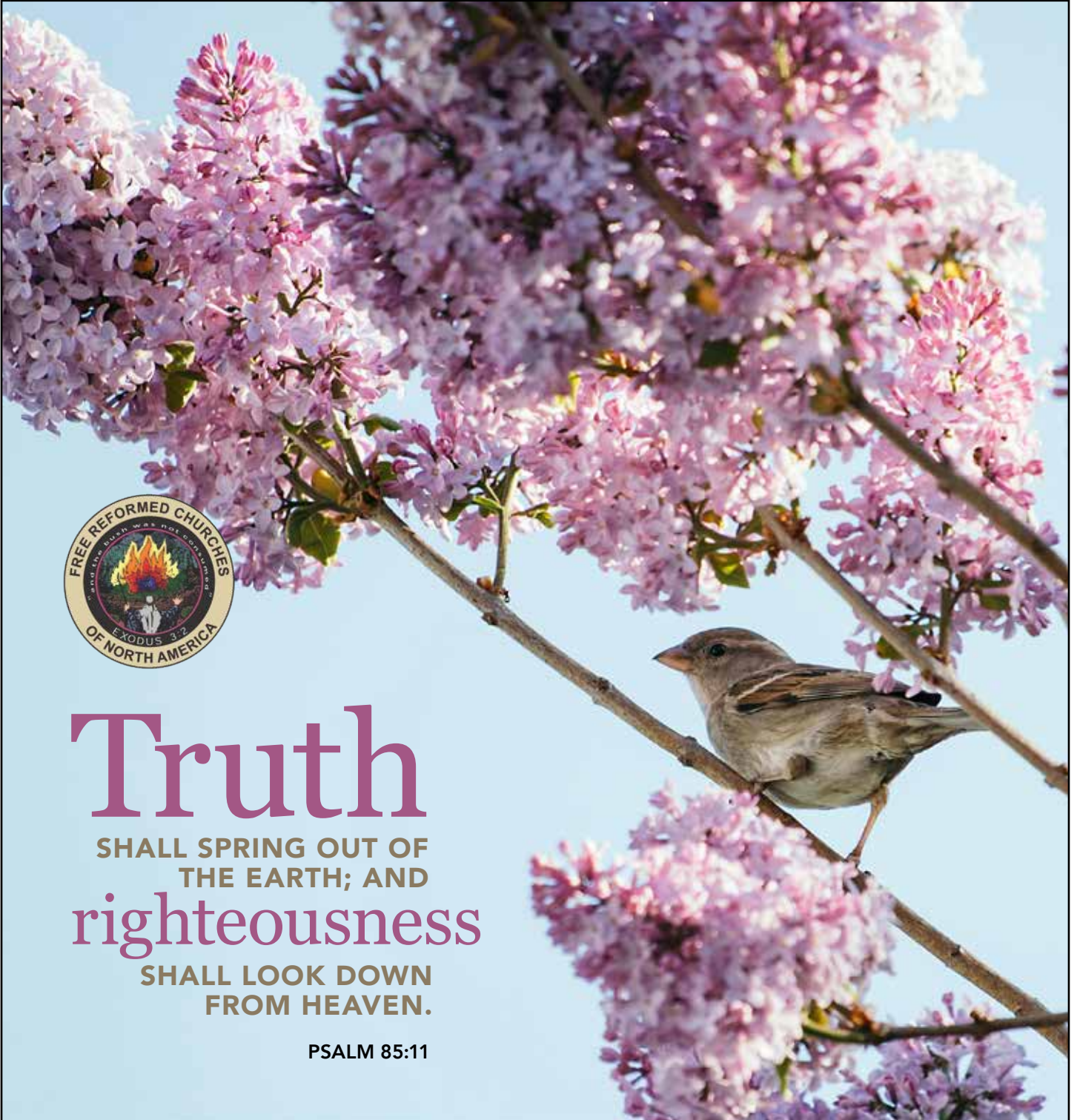


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# THE MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FREE REFORMED CHURCHES OF NORTH AMERICA



Truth  
SHALL SPRING OUT OF  
THE EARTH; AND  
righteousness  
SHALL LOOK DOWN  
FROM HEAVEN.

PSALM 85:11

**02** MEDITATION:  
JOY AMID TEARS

**06** EDITORIAL:  
THE KEY OF  
PREACHING (1)

**16** THEMES & REFLECTIONS:  
A VISIT TO PURITAN REFORMED  
THEOLOGY SEMINARY



# JOY AMID TEARS

*Ephesians 1:19,20*

*Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 33, Q.&A. 90*

Scripture teaches us that the quickening of the new man involves a sincere joy of heart in God through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Q&A. 90). What is a sincere joy of heart in God? You may have heard some say that there is little joy in our FRC churches. What are we to make of that? Is something wrong with our churches? Are we perhaps too heavy on sin and too light on joy?

The catechism speaks here of the two parts of a **true** conversion. That suggests that there can also be fake conversions. Scripture teaches that, for instance, in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13). Some of the seed fell in stony places and immediately germinated and sprung up. But it did not last long and soon shriveled up, because it had not sufficient root. When the Lord Jesus explains this part of the parable, He says that these people immediately receive the word they hear with joy, but it soon turns out that their faith has no depth and lasts only for a while. When tribulation or persecution arise because of the word, they sooner or later fall away (Matt. 13:20-21). These people receive the Gospel *with joy* and look so much better than others who may be struggling with their faith.

Perhaps you sometimes even ask yourself, “How real is *my* faith? Do *I* have a sincere heartfelt joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ?” In the light of all these questions, the answer of the catechism is meant to make it clear to one and all that a **true** conversion consists not only of the dying off of the old man, but also of the quickening of the new man.

## **Raising them Sovereignly**

“Quickening” means “making alive.” Both the original German and Dutch versions of the Catechism use the word “resurrection.” They ask, “What is the *resurrection* of the new man?” This right away directs us to quite a number of Scripture passages. Take, for instance, Romans 6:5: “For if we have been planted together in the likeness of [Christ’s] death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection.” Romans 8:11 says, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.” There we have that word “quicken” or “make alive” in connection with the spiritual resurrection of the believer. When we look at the text out of Ephesians 1, we hear about “the exceeding greatness of God the Father’s power to us-ward who be-

lieve, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Now we just heard from Scripture that as God the Father raised the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit, so he also raises sinners to spiritual life by the same Holy Spirit.

The thing now which we desire to do is to make this being raised to newness of life a **real** thing for us, so that we can realize what it is, and thus ask ourselves: “Has this happened to me?” There are two reasons why we may ask ourselves that question: 1. Because we believe that we already have that newness of life, and we now want to see it confirmed by the teaching of the catechism. Or, 2. Because we are not at all sure about our salvation and would like to test ourselves against Scripture.

What we must say first is that this work of God the Holy Spirit raising up people to newness of life in Christ and because of Christ is a totally **sovereign** work. We people really have nothing to do with it. It is a resurrection of people who are dead in trespasses and sins before the LORD God. They are dead as far as the spiritual reality and presence of the LORD God is concerned. When I walk along the road and there is a squirrel on the side of the road ahead of me, it will practically always scurry up a tree away from me. The only time it stays where it is is when it is dead, roadkill. Then it does not see or hear me coming. Before that dead squirrel will run away from me, it must first be resurrected. The same is true for people dead before the LORD God. They can only come to know the LORD God when they are made spiritually alive. Any Gospel preaching or teaching does nothing to them. They have no interest in the things of the LORD. There is no awareness of His presence in people dead unto Him. This is not the condition of just **some** people. By birth this is the condition of **all** people. Unless the LORD God for Jesus’ sake brings a person back to spiritual life, resurrects him or her by the power of the Holy Spirit, that person will continue forever in his or her spiritual death and godless life. When people have a sincere joy of heart in the LORD God through the Lord Jesus Christ, these people have been resurrected by the Holy Spirit.

Now, those truly converted will always confess that this being brought to newness of life through God the Holy Spirit is a **sovereign work of God**. By sovereign they mean that the LORD God was completely free to bring them to life or to leave them spiritually dead. By sovereign these people confess that they themselves really had nothing to do with that. Sovereign means that it was the LORD God’s decision, not their decision. They will tell you: “Sovereign means that it is **100%** His decision and His work, and **0%** my decision and my work; I myself had nothing to do with it.” How have they come to that confession? They have learned how great a grace-miracle it is that they now have a sincere joy of heart in God through Christ and a love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. When did they learn that? They learned that when God the Holy Spirit first opened their spiritual eyes and showed them both their own condition and the grace and the love of the LORD God in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Holy Spirit enabled them to see all this, its result was joy amid tears.

### **Joy amid Tears**

What happens when the Holy Spirit truly opens the eyes of one who had been spiritually dead? That person begins to see two totally opposite pictures at the same time. These are not literal pictures drawn with pencil or brush, but two pictures that are spiritually discerned. They are spiritual pictures which he never saw before, because they are drawn by the Spirit of God. 1 Corinthians 2:14 tells us that “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” These two pictures have been there all along. But as long as the Holy Spirit

The same is true for people dead before the LORD God. They can only come to know the LORD God when they are made spiritually alive.

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did not take the scales from his spiritual eyes, he did not see them because they are seen *spiritually*.

It may not be possible to determine what such a person sees first. Yet, something of the great glory and majesty and holiness of the LORD God will impact him, and immediately he will also see something of himself, not as a separate photograph, but a reflection of how he looks spiritually in the light of God's glory. When he sees these two spiritual pictures together, his own spiritual picture becoming visible in the glory-light of God's holy majesty, he falls to the ground. He realizes that he cannot expect to remain before God's presence the way he is. He sees his own spiritual rebellion, moral filthiness, and hell-worthiness. He condemns himself, not with anger against the LORD God, but in total agreement: "Yes, LORD, thy judgment is right. Thou art just in all thy doings."

Before the perfect beauty of the LORD's holiness, he sees himself now no longer as he saw himself before he saw God's holiness, for then he looked pretty good in his own eyes, especially when he compared himself with others. Now he sees himself as the LORD God has always seen him. He condemns himself. But then, as he confirms God's righteous judgment, a Lamb appears "as it had been slain" (Rev 5:6) and he hears the song, "Thou ... wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5:9). As that man falls to the ground in worship, he hears the Lamb say, "Come unto me, all *ye* that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

By these words of the Lamb, our friend is even more humbled, because he now is overwhelmed by the spiritual insight that God commends His love toward him, in that, while he was yet a sinner, Christ died for him. He hears the proclamation of the Gospel in Romans 5:9-11: "Much more then, being now justified by [the Lamb's] blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Our friend begins to weep, for it is all too much for him: God's indescribable glory and overwhelming holiness contrasted with his own filthiness, and then the gospel of the Lamb giving its life for him, God thereby showing His love for our hell-worthy friend. Our friend experiences all this in those two pictures. Before them, he is overcome by the grace of God and experiences deep joy amid tears. His tears are the outflow of the sincere sorrow of heart over having provoked the LORD his God by his sins. His tears are because, after all those years of hostility and indifference to the Lord, the Lamb of God is nevertheless calling him to Himself and is ready to wash him clean from all his

sins with His own precious blood. Amid the tears is joy not just that he is now saved from hell, but above all joy that the saving sovereign love of God is reaching out to him, in order that he too may live to the praise of God's glory.

True conversion then is a complete change-over of a spiritually dead person into one for whom the blessed Triune God has become a living spiritual being made visible in the living Lord Jesus. His Name is I AM, and He is ever the same yesterday, today, and forever. True conversion leads to a sincere joy of heart in whom the LORD God truly is in all His being, in all His triune fullness. True conversion is to have your heart lifted

up above all that is in this world, above all the misery, grief, sorrow, anger, hatred, suffering, war, and worry; lifted up above all to the throne of the LORD God, rejoicing in His perfect wisdom, government, and accomplishment of His plan and purpose. True conversion is to rest in God's perfect righteousness so clearly demonstrated in the Lord Jesus on the cross and in His grace in drawing and saving a multitude beyond number in the Lord Jesus.

Yet the joy remains amidst tears, for continually these spiritual pictures of the infinite wonderfulness of the LORD God are spoiled by the dirty fingers of sin. How can sin still be present before such glory? The clearer the picture of

glorious beauty of our Saviour God becomes, the more grieving our imperfect sinful lives become. This means, beloved, that those who are truly converted will never have a shallow, noisy joy, but always a quiet, humble joy, bathed in the tears of humble repentance. The clearer our view of our God, the clearer the grasp of the deep, deep roots of our sins and the greater wonder His love is. Thus, the truly converted have joy bathed in tears.

### ***Not a Must but a Delight***

Such a conversion can only lead to love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. Have you experienced how you can sometimes as it were grasp with your hands rebellion against the LORD God? A 20-year-old young woman said to her pastor, "Yes, I will make confession of faith someday. But first I am going to have some fun." There are people who excuse their breaking of God's law by saying, "But we are sinners." Why do so many church people, older and younger, rebel inwardly against true Christian living? Because they have not yet fully come to true conversion.

The church is the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. When a bride loves her husband to be, she will do anything to please him. Young men can take advantage of that love, "If you really love me...." But the Lord Jesus is not a Bridegroom who takes advantage of His Bride. He has given His life for His bride. Out of sincere joy of heart, the bride can give her life to Him

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and do what pleases Him. As a believer sees more of the glory and mercy of God in Jesus Christ, he comes to love the LORD God so much that he simply wants to do things for His Lord. He wants to live for his Lord. He believes that the LORD God in His Word gives directions for good.

Thus, the truly converted believer comes to love God's Word, including God's law. He wants to honour His Saviour God with a truly holy walk. He desires to purify himself as Christ is pure. To do this, our converted friend continues to need the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit. He discovers the truth of the words of the apostle: "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom 7:22). Yes, "How I love thy law O Lord, daily **joy** its truths afford." Yet also here his joy is amid tears, for he must confess, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:23-24). He desires to live according to the will of God with love and delight, not because he must, but because he wants to. Yet, he cannot. Even the truly converted person has no strength in himself and can only live through what Ephesians 1 calls the exceeding greatness of God's resurrection power toward those who believe. That power gives the victory in the struggle to actually do what in his heart he delights to do. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This means that no truly converted person is able in his own strength to live with delight and love according to the will of God. It is by grace alone, with joy amidst tears.

### More than Superficial

Let us return in the parable of the sower to those people who received the Word with joy but did not last because they had insufficient depth when troubles came. We have seen how true conversion does not lead to a loud excited hallelujah Christendom, but to joy amidst tears. The Holy Spirit shows God's people the wondrous and infinite glory of the Triune God, and their own sin, and amid it, the Lamb of God who saves through sovereign grace. How humble a joy that brings! How it works a quiet and dependent spirit! When that joy awakens the desire to live with love and delight according to the will of this gracious and sovereign God, then again that joy is not superficial noise, but a humble and amazed joy that God the Lord accomplishes His good works through His people in spite of the weakness of their flesh. <sup>1</sup>

*Rev. H. VanEssen is an emeritus pastor and member of the Free Reformed Church of Mitchell, Ontario. Due to poor eyesight currently, he was not able to supply a new meditation. This meditation is a condensed version of a reading sermon he submitted to the Free Reformed Publications Committee in 2001.*

## 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL SENIOR'S DAY

# What is our Identity?

### Coffee

9:30 AM,

### Morning Session

10:30 AM

Speech in English

### Lunch:

12:00 PM

### Speaker

Pastor Lipsy

followed by singing

### When

Tuesday

May 14, 2024 DV

### Where

Ebenezer FRC (Dundas)

253 Weir's Lane  
Hamilton, ON L9H 5E1

- Speech and singing will be in English
- Live stream available



## Trinitarian Bible Society (Canada)

The Central Ontario Auxiliary

of the Trinitarian Bible Society

Invites you to attend their 2024 Annual Spring Meeting to be held, The Lord Willing, on Thursday April 11, 2024, at 8 PM, at the **Hamilton Free Reformed Church, 1114 Old Mohawk Rd., Ancaster**. The main speaker will be **the new General Secretary of TBS (Canada), Mr. William Grisnich**, of Coaldale, Alberta. After graduating from Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, in 1984 with a Bachelor of Education degree, he became a teacher at Calvin Christian School in Coalhurst, Alberta, where he has taught for the past 38.5 years, including 17 years as principal.

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# THE KEY OF PREACHING (I)

Many mentors, advisors, and coaches are ready to give advice. Many teachers are ready to inform us about many topics. You can choose to subscribe to whomever you wish to hear and watch. Do preachers sit with the rows of mentors and educators offering advice and information, only theirs is of a spiritual nature? Or do preachers have a message that comes with the authority of heaven and the weight of eternity filling it? Too often their message has no authority or weight. But the question remains: Does Christ call His preachers to bring a message with His authority and the weight of His final judgment filling it? Studying preaching as a key of the kingdom gives guidance in answering this question.

## The Kingdom of Heaven

The “kingdom of heaven” is a heavenly kingdom in contrast to all the earthly kingdoms here below. The King of this kingdom is not here below as one among multiple kings but is the King of kings whose throne is established in the heavens. That is why this kingdom is also called “the kingdom of God.” It belongs to the God who is exalted above all of creation and mankind! He possesses it, rules it, and receives subjects into it.

At the same time, Scripture tells us God has appointed His Son to rule His kingdom. After Jesus finished all His mediatorial work on earth and secured by His sacrifice the grace which all the citizens of His kingdom would need, He said to His disciples: “all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Then, He ascended to the right hand of God on High. God gave Christ Jesus the power to rule as king over His kingdom.

For a king to reign in a kingdom, he must have subjects. The kingdom of heaven also has subjects. Not only all the redeemed around the throne of God, but also all the heirs of that eternal life are already citizens. They live on this earth as ones that have been born again in Zion. They have Him as their king already now and may enjoy access to Him and the privileges of citizenship. They serve their king.

It is not up to us to decide who is in the kingdom of heaven or admit those whom we like and exclude those whom we dislike. Christ has the authority in His kingdom. He determines for whom the door is open and for whom it is shut. In Revelation 3:7, He reveals himself as “he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” If He opens the door to you, then no man can succeed in shutting the door and keeping you outside His kingdom. If He closes the door, then no minister can succeed in opening it for you. Just as the owner of a house holds the keys to that house and decides when the door will be locked and when it will be open, so Christ opens and shuts.

However, Christ is in heaven. How can we know whether the door



is open for us here on earth? How can we know if we are citizens of His kingdom already and whether, when we die, the door will be open or shut to us? Christ, the King, has given instructions to His servants on earth to open and shut the door according to His directions. The king does not stand at the gate of his kingdom Himself but gives His servants the power of the keys. He gives them the key to lock and unlock the door.

Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 16:19: “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Binding and loosing refer to authoritative pronouncements concerning what is prohibited and permitted, what may be present and not be present in His Kingdom. The Lord Jesus is speaking there to Peter on behalf of all his disciples. Peter had just confessed: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus had declared that he would build His church on that rock and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. His kingdom has an unshakeable foundation: “Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.” Who will be in it? Jesus gives the key that opens and closes to His disciples as His office-bearers and through the generations to all the office-bearers called by Him to serve in His church.

## The Preaching

According to Lord’s Day 31, Answer 83 of the Heidelberg Catechism, office-bearers exercise these keys by preaching and church discipline. The preaching is to come with divine authority in declaring what is permitted and forbidden, as well as whose sins are remitted and whose are not remitted (John 20:23). The preaching declares for whom the door is open and for whom it is not, who are citizens of the kingdom and who are not. If the preaching declares to you that because you live a certain way, you are lost, then heaven itself says “amen” to that truth, whether you agree or not. If the preaching declares that you are forgiven, then heaven says “amen,” whether you realize it or not.

We may wonder, do ministers really have such power? Can they tell me whether I am inside or outside the kingdom? Does God listen to what they say and simply confirm it? Ministers have no power in themselves. They cannot tell a single person whether they are in or out of the kingdom based on what they think. Ministers are ministers or servants of the great King, who convey the King’s word.

That is why Answer 84 begins to answer the question about how the kingdom of heaven is opened and shut by the preaching with: “when according to the command of Christ, it is declared and publicly testified....” The preaching is to declare according to Christ’s command.

Our first concern for the preaching must be whether it is faithful to Christ’s command and God’s Word! If a messenger came on behalf of a king with a message, you would not care so much about his age and looks, the pitch of his voice and the naturalness of his gestures; your concern would be for him to faithfully convey the message of the king. If a friendly messenger twisted the King’s warning into a complement or a harsh messenger twisted the king’s promise to give us something into a demand that we give something, they would only hurt us. The messenger must be faithful to his sender.

Many things can be discussed about preaching and preachers. We all have our different standards of evaluation, but if the preacher has received the key of preaching from Christ Himself, he is accountable to Christ for how he uses it. Paul declares: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1-2a). Nothing can make up for a lack of faithfulness to His master. A preacher is not a servant of the congregation in the sense that he is to take their wishes as his authority. Paul exhorts: “Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

What reason there is for us to pray for faithfulness for our pastors. Martin Luther introduced his book on the keys of the kingdom by lamenting that “the horrible abuse...of the precious keys is one of the greatest plagues which God’s wrath has spread over the ungrateful world.” While he had in view the indulgences and banns of Rome in particular, it is still a dreadful thing for pastors to misuse their authority to manipulate or mislead people. Pray that preachers would indeed be servants who

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serve under Christ’s authority over them.

The flipside is that when a minister brings the word of God and not his own ideas, that preaching comes with the authority of Christ Himself. In 2 Corinthians 5:19-20, Paul declares: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” God worked salvation, and He committed its proclamation to His servants. He continues: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” An ambassador represents his country, kingdom, and king, speaking on behalf of the king. When the faithful preaching sounds, then it is as if God Himself pleads with us! If Christ stood in your pulpit and proclaimed what He did to obtain salvation, called you to turn to Him in faith and repentance, and proclaimed His power to save by His Spirit, what would you do? Now, when His messengers proclaim that message, it is as if Christ Himself is calling you: “Be ye reconciled to God!”

We are to receive faithful preaching as the message of the King of the heavenly kingdom. When we come to church, this thought

must be in our mind: I am about to hear a messenger from the king in heaven. What news does he have from heaven’s court for me? Our prayer must be for God to enable him to bring that message and open our hearts to receive whatever that message is. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul thanks God that “when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.”

Christ entrusts this key of preaching His Word into the hands of His servants to use it faithfully. As Martin Luther said, “We are only to be God’s instruments and to lend him our voices so that he himself alone may speak and govern through us.” This God is not in the row of those offering information and advice. He is the supreme God who in these last days has spoken through His Son (Heb. 1:1-3) and who says, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). He speaks with authority through the preaching, binding and loosing, opening and shutting.



**Source:** Martin Luther, *The Keys*, in vol. 40, *Luther’s Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958).



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FREE REFORMED ASSOCIATION

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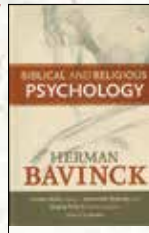
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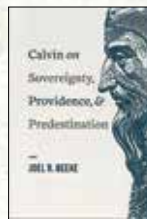


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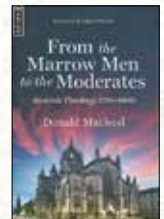
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## DELIGHTING IN GOD

**Sarah Edwards – *Delighting in God*** by Sharon James. Published by Evangelical Press, an imprint of 10Publishing, Leyland, RR25 2DU, England. Softcover, 141 pages.

In the preface to the biography of *Jonathan Edwards*, Iain H. Murray\* writes: “We believe that all the truths exemplified in Edwards’ life remain relevant today. One of these truths is that a Christian wife is a man’s best and most constant helper. Were it not so, these pages could never have been carried through to a conclusion” (p. xiii). Murray is referring to his wife, Jean. The same thing may be said of Sarah Edwards, the wife of Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758), American Puritan theologian and philosopher who is regarded as one of the greatest intellects America has known. His sermons and writings continue to be reprinted, read, and studied.

Sarah’s relationship with Edwards began when she was 13 and Jonathan was 20 years old. She so impressed him that he wrote a description of her that has passed into history. “They say there is a young lady in New Haven who is loved by that Great Being, who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this Great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight; and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on him... (p. 26). In this book, Sharon James, the author, has many quotes from Sarah Edwards that illustrate her extraordinary spiritual disposition.

To understand these two remarkable individuals, Jonathan Edwards and Sarah Pierpont (maiden name), one has to know a little about the background of their times. This is explained in chapter 1, “The Setting.” Both were reared in homes of descendants of the Puritans, who disembarked from the *Mayflower* at Cape Cod in 1620. By 1720, there were 13 small British colonies around the coast of the Atlantic. Life was not without its dangers because the French, who had settled in Canada, encouraged the Indians to attack the English settlers. Gruesome massacres were still in the memory of Jonathan and Sarah when they started married life in Northampton in 1727.

Sarah was born in 1710, and by the time Jonathan and Sarah grew up, many settlers had become well-to-do owners of fertile land and property. The class distinction of that era, landowners employing indentured servants and slaves had become well established. Only a few Puritans viewed slavery as a horrible evil to be opposed to, although the colonials generally believed “That both have one Maker, and that their Maker made them alike with the same nature (p. 23). Later, many leading Puritans in New England vigorously opposed slavery.

Sarah was 17 years old and Jonathan was 25 years old when they married. He had met and observed her pious character while a tutor at Yale, and no doubt saw her at church, where Sarah’s widowed mother had a prominent place. Sarah’s character and that of Edwards were a perfect blend. At age 16 she recorded that “About nine years ago, I was led to see my danger of eternal destruction, but I had a resolution given me to seek for mercy... The next Sabbath I was led to prize near-



ness to Christ as the creature’s greatest happiness. My soul thirsted for him, so that death seemed nothing to me, that I might be with him, for he was altogether lovely...” (pp. 27-28).

Just prior to their marriage, Jonathan had become co-pastor of the church of his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, who had ministered since 1669. At the age of 83, he was still a forceful preacher, and his church was one of the largest outside Boston. Stoddard set his mark on the church as a strong dogmatist, and a division had developed between the prominent town leaders and the common people. Sarah and Jonathan’s entry into the church does not seem to have been regarded as unusual. He spent much time in his study, not just in academic pursuits but also seeking a deeper fellowship with the Lord (p. 33). His heart was set on the love and service to God and Sarah shared in this, which some have led to characterize their “marriage as an uncommon union” (p. 37).

Sarah’s first baby was born a year after their marriage and “she had ten more children at approximately two-year intervals until she was 40” (p. 39). Eight of them were daughters who were educated and became well-known through prominent marriages. One was godly Jerusha who had a spiritual relationship with missionary David Brainard. Both died at an early age.

In 1729, Edwards became senior pastor, and Sarah enthusiastically stood by his side, leading women’s prayer meetings, and visiting the sick and poor. Solomon Stoddard, Edwards’ grandfather, had gone along with Puritan preachers who implemented a “Half-Way Covenant” membership. Conversion experiences were less common among second-generation New Englanders and Puritan standards did not allow children to be baptized until parents had become professing members. The “Half-Way Covenant” allowed unconverted parents to have their children baptized. When he became a full-time pastor, Jonathan continued his urgent preaching and pressed his congregation to think about their eternal state. The results first took hold of young people, and then also older ones came “under intense conviction of sin and then to a personal knowledge of forgiveness...” At one point, three hundred people were converted in six months. Believers enjoyed a fresh sense of God’s presence (p. 51). Other towns became affected as well, and the revival spread with visits by George Whitefield and other evangelists.

Sarah’s experiences in 1742 are recorded in detail in this book and they are extraordinary. Her husband wrote them down and much of the book consists of these experiences, which can be categorized as: 1) Desire for greater holiness; 2) Submission of all to God; 3) Desire for God’s glory; 4) Joyful assurance of God’s love and forgiveness; anticipation of heaven; 4) Intense love for others; unwillingness to have any judgmental thoughts” (p. 62).

But soon Sarah would be faced with unimagined difficulties: war with the French which killed English settlers, slander, bereavement, poverty, dismissal from the church, moving to an isolated settlement, and finally the loss of her husband.

## MRS. RICKY (FREDERIKA) PRONK

When Edwards was dismissed from his church, there was no income. These events are described in the final chapters 7 to 9. Sarah survived the testing with grace and good sense. Friends in Scotland helped as they could. Raised in wealth and comfort, she and her daughters took up cottage work to help with family finances. Two months before their dismissal from Northampton, Sarah gave birth to a son, their last child. In October 1752, the family moved to Stockbridge, a missionary settlement on the frontier, where Edwards would minister to 200 Mohican Indians, some Mohawks and a few English families.

Amid the tensions caused by the scalping of Hurons and English families by the French, Jonathan continued to minister to the Indians. He also learned how the Indians had been exploited and was shocked. In time, one of his sons became a theologian, a pioneer of linguistics of Native North American Indians and a firm opponent of slavery. Jonathan's status was re-instated when he was invited to become President of New Jersey College (now Princeton) and accepted after consultation with other ministers.

The final test for Sarah came in 1758 when her husband went to Princeton while she supervised the moving of their goods, and he died the following March due to being inoculated against smallpox, the scourge of that era. His last words were: "Trust in God and you need not fear" (p. 114). The last test of Sarah's faith was when she was suffering a painful illness. Writing to her daughter, Esther, her response was: "What shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. O that we may kiss the rod and lay our hands on our mouths! The Lord has done it. He has made me adore his goodness that we had him [her husband] so long..." (p. 115).

Soon after her life partner in the Lord died, Sarah travelled to New Jersey to "collect the two orphaned grandchildren" left by her daughter Esther. Here she contracted dysentery and died on October 2, 1758, aged 48. In her last hours, she testified: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth nor any other created things shall be able to separate us from the love of God which in Christ Jesus our Lord" (p. 116).

Sarah Edwards delighted in God. Sharon James asks, "Is such an experience something we should all be seeking?" (p. 121). James states that God is sovereign. He works at different times, in different ways. He may not necessarily work in us in the same way as he has done with other believers. There is no doubt that Sarah had an important role in the life of her famous husband. Sarah lived during a time of right doctrine and unexpected revival. A leading European of church renewal said: "A life changed, a church revived, a nation reformed, and a world evangelized" (p. 121). James ends her book this way: "That sums up the priorities of Sarah and Jonathan Edwards. It should be our desire too" (p. 121).

\*For further reading, the book, *Jonathan Edwards* by Iain H. Murray is recommended.

*These books and others may be purchased in Canada at Reformed Book Services in Brantford, Ontario, and at Reformation Heritage Books, Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A.*

*Mrs. Ricky (Frederika) Pronk is a member of Grace Free Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario*

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# THE ORDER OF SALVATION (18)

## THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS (2)

In the last study of the doctrine of perseverance, we learned that true believers in Christ can never fall away from the faith. Those who were chosen from eternity, regenerated in time, brought to repentance and faith, justification and sanctification, will persevere to the end of their lives and enter heaven as glorified saints. God will never permit those, whom He has effectually called by His Spirit, to fall away from the state of grace. They will persevere, not due to their own strength, but by God's preserving grace and power. As the *Canons of Dort* state: "Those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end" (Canons V,3).

### Believers' Worst Sins are Forgiven by God

In Canons V, 4, we read that the saints not only commit sins every day but that from time to time they sin grievously. The names of David and Peter are mentioned as examples of saints who fell into seemingly unpardonable sins. How is that possible? Doesn't Scripture teach that true believers can never lose their salvation and are permanently kept in a state of grace by God's power?

Indeed, but at times they give in to temptation. They know Christ's warning "to watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Mark 14:38), but when they neglect this warning, "they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils" (Canons V, 4).

How did David, the man after God's own heart, fall into grievous sin? Probably he did not pray and did not watch out for temptation. He had not gone with his armies to fight against Israel's enemies. As he strolled on the roof later in the day, he saw something he was not supposed to see: a woman next door bathing. The scene unfolding before his eyes led him to commit adultery and shortly afterwards to murder as well.

The apostle Peter also committed a great sin: he denied Christ with a threefold oath. When he entered the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, he did not expect that he would curse his Master three times. He overestimated his strength and underestimated Satan's power.

God's people sin every day, although not always grievously like David and Peter. Not every child of God is an adulterer, murderer, or denier of Christ. He or she can fall into such sins, but not all the time. Maybe that's why our *Form for Baptism* says: "If we sometimes through weakness fall into sin." True believers do not *live* in sin. The apostle John says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed [of regeneration] remaineth in him: and he cannot sin,

because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). While a true believer cannot live in sin, this does not mean he never sins. Every child of God knows he is full of sin and will often complain “innumerable evils have compassed me about, ... I am not able to look up” (Ps. 40:12) and “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14).

### God’s Reaction to Grievous Sins

When believers fall into sin, they pay dearly. As we read in *Canons V, 5*: “By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God’s favour for a time.”

When saints *fall* into sin, God shows His anger. If He does not, they may think God condones sin and does not take sin seriously. The reality is that when we allow sin to fill our hearts, the Holy Spirit will withdraw from us, at least temporarily, until we come to repentance. We may have experienced “sweet communion with the Lord,” but cannot “constantly abide” if that communion is interrupted by some serious offence we have committed (cf. *Psalter 203:1*). We will immediately begin to sense the Spirit’s absence. We feel forsaken and no longer receive blessings. We may attend church as usual; David also went to the tabernacle and took part in the worship services. Yet, as he writes in *Psalm 32:3*, “When I kept silence [did not repent] my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.” Comparing his experiences to the dry summer heat he said, “Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (v. 4).

This is how it can be with us when we have sinned grievously. Spiritual activity comes to a halt. Hearing the Word preached in church or read at home leaves us unaffected. Prayers are said but they seem to bounce back from the ceiling. We may even go through the motions of repentance without any desire to give up the sins we love.

While this attitude prevails, we will remain spiritually dry until we sincerely repent and ask for God’s forgiveness. Such repentance emerged from David and Peter’s hearts, the former after a long time, while the latter expressed it almost immediately. David had to be shocked into reality by the prophet Nathan’s rebuke that he was “that man” who had stolen Bathsheba from her husband Uriah, while Peter, minutes after denying his Master, wept bitterly when Christ made eye-contact with His cowardly disciple.

### Human Perseverance needs Divine Preservation

The repentance of David, Peter, and other sinners proves that they had not lost their faith but persevered in it by confessing their sins and begging for pardon. Yet their efforts to persevere were made possible only by God’s preservation of His saving work in them. As the *Canons of Dort* state in *Head V, 7*:

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit, certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favour of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

The doctrine of perseverance relates not only to regeneration but also to election. All whom God has chosen in Christ are safe and cannot possibly perish because God has given them His Holy Spirit, and His Spirit is never completely withdrawn from them.

However, believers often fear that the latter will happen. David’s great fear came to expression in *Psalm 51* when he prayed: “Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (v. 11). David’s fear was real in light of the enormity of his sin. From God’s perspective, however, He could not take back what He had said to His chosen saints: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (*Jer. 31:3*).

### Perseverance Requires the Use of the Means of Grace

The work of grace in a sinner’s heart is a work of God alone and not of man. God begins that saving work; God continues it; and God brings it to perfection. We owe all perseverance to preserving grace, yet He does His saving work through certain means which He has commanded us to use. These means of grace are to be used for the beginning of spiritual life as well as for its continuation and perfection. As the *Canons of Dort* state: “[God] preserves, continues, and perfects [his saving work] by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments” (*Chapter V, 14*).

If God’s saints hope to grow in grace, they must make faithful and regular use of the means of grace. If the Holy Spirit has used the preaching to work faith in our hearts, the seed of regeneration needs to grow and will grow by the same means whereby it was planted, namely, the preached Word. That means worship services must be faithfully attended so the planted seed may grow and mature. The problem is that believers do not always use the means of grace faithfully and consistently. As a result, their spiritual growth is slowed or seriously impeded. The apostle Peter urges his fellow believers “as new born babes, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). If a baby is not fed wholesome food, its growth will be stunted, and the baby will eventually die.

**The work of grace in a sinner’s heart is a work of God alone and not of man. God begins that saving work; God continues it; and God brings it to perfection.**

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## The Danger of Apostasy

In Hebrews 6 and 10, the apostle warns against the danger of apostasy. Some of the early Christians had confessed Christ but fear of persecution was tempting them to return to Judaism. This was a danger then and still is a danger today, though in different ways and circumstances. It happens when we allow sin to take over our lives, even ever so gradually, so that worldly practices once avoided begin to look attractive and acceptable because “everybody does it” and “why not move with the times?” Such an attitude is not conducive to the efforts of the saints to persevere in faith. Instead, the danger many professing Christians face is that of backsliding and falling away from the faith “once delivered unto the saints,” while they should “earnestly contend for that faith” (Jude 1:3).

We need forgiving and enabling grace. Both graces He will give to those who plead for them. That is where the promises come in. We must not only take seriously God’s warnings, threats, and admonitions, but also and especially His promises. We may plead these promises and say, “Lord, Thou hast promised to help us in fighting the good fight of faith. We want to persevere in that fight but cannot do it by ourselves. The enemy is too strong and our faith is too weak.” We must strive to enter Christ’s kingdom through the narrow gate and can only hope to succeed by perseverance and preservation, the latter enabling the former.


In John 10:27-28, Jesus explains, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” The security of believers does not depend on their hold of Christ but on Christ’s hold of them. Jesus goes on to say, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”

Believers are doubly secure. The hand of the Son and the hand of the Father both clasp the weak and feeble hand of the believer so tightly that no one will ever be able to snatch him or her from the double handclasp of God. This double security of sinners is of great comfort to believers, when they grasp it by a God-given faith in its beginning, continuation, and perfection. 11

*Rev. C. Pronk is an emeritus pastor and member of the Free Reformed Church of Brantford, Ontario.*

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## Hope Reformed Christian School

Hope Reformed Christian School is a Christian K-12 school in Paris, Ontario, serving the local Reformed Christian communities of south-western Ontario. We offer a Christ-centered, Reformed education, nurturing and developing the students' God-given gifts, character, and Biblical faith for the glory of God and the building of His Kingdom.

We continue to be blessed with an expanding student population and are currently accepting applications for the 2024-2025 school year for the following:

**Kindergarten Teacher - (part time, every other day)**

**Junior Elementary Teacher - (full time)**

**Intermediate Elementary - (part time Math, LA and/or French)**

**Educational Assistant - (5-6 hours per day)**

**High School Teacher - Various subject areas - (full and/or part time)**

**High School Teacher/ Vice Principal - (full time)**

We are looking for passionate, committed, and professional applicants who seek to serve Jesus Christ in the area of Reformed Christian education and are a member in good standing of a church within the North American Presbyterian and Reformed council (NAPARC).

Please submit a resume with a statement of your philosophy of education, a statement of faith, and references, including one from your current pastor. Inquiries and/or applications can be forwarded to:

**Mr. J. Kikkert, Principal**  
331 German School Road  
Paris, ON N3L 3E1  
Via email: [principal@hopercs.ca](mailto:principal@hopercs.ca)



[www.hopercs.ca](http://www.hopercs.ca)

Phone: 519-448-9913

## TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

### PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

is now accepting applications for **full-time teaching positions** and a **leadership position** for our grade 1 - 12 classes.

We particularly need to fill the following upcoming vacancies:

- A high-school teacher (grade 7-12) who can give part-time administrative support to the principal,
- A high-school Math/Sciences teacher,
- A high-school Bible Studies and Social Studies teacher,
  - A grade 1 teacher,
- A part-time woodworking shop teacher.

We are looking for enthusiastic teachers who have a passion for Christian education. We encourage applications by qualified teachers who submit to God's Holy Word as it is most clearly and consistently interpreted in the Reformed confessions, and who are committed to educating children and youth for the formation of a distinct Christian worldview. Providence Christian School is a growing Christian school in Monarch, Alberta. It is situated in a beautiful, southern, rural community, minutes from Lethbridge. It has grades K-12 with about 200 students and with 16 full-time staff members.

### PCS OFFERS:

- a four-day school week,
- attractive working and living conditions,
- a growing, committed school community,
- a dedicated team of teachers.

These positions commence on August 1, 2024.

For further information check out the school website [www.pcsmonarch.com](http://www.pcsmonarch.com)

Personal inquiries and / or applications can be forwarded to:

- next year's principal, **Miss Angela Feyter:**  
[assistantprincipal@pcsmonarch.com](mailto:assistantprincipal@pcsmonarch.com) or
- our current principal, **Mr. Hugo VanderHoek:**  
[principal@pcsmonarch.com](mailto:principal@pcsmonarch.com)

## HERITAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

invites applications for the 2024/25 school year:  
**Part Time and Full Time Elementary Teachers**  
**Part Time and Full Time Educational Assistants**  
**Part Time and Full Time Secondary Teachers**



### HCS

- A dedicated and supportive Reformed Christian community
- A student body of 660+ students from K-12
- A cohesive, professional faculty and staff of 80+ persons

### We seek

- Qualified applicants who seek to serve Jesus Christ in the area of Christian education and who submit to Holy Scripture as confessed in the Reformed creeds
- Committed professionals who positively lead students to a life of dedicated service to our Lord
- Enthusiastic rookies or seasoned veterans looking for a positive change

### How to apply

- Submit a cover letter, résumé, a statement of faith, and references, (including one from your current pastor). Teacher applicants, please submit your philosophy of education as well.

Please forward inquiries and/or applications to:

Mr. Brian Kemper, Principal  
Heritage Christian School  
2850 Fourth Avenue, Box 400  
Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada L0R 1S0  
Phone (905) 562-7303 Fax (905) 562-0020 Email: [bkemper@hcsjordan.ca](mailto:bkemper@hcsjordan.ca)  
Website: [www.hcsjordan.ca](http://www.hcsjordan.ca)

*"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord." Ps. 127:3*

# A VISIT TO PRTS

THEMES AND REFLECTIONS - FEBRUARY 21-22, 2024



Every other year or so, the Theological Education Committee (TEC) of our churches sends two members of our committee to visit Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary (PRTS) where we have been sending our students to be trained since 1998. The purpose of these visits is: First, to strengthen the ties between the seminary and our churches; second, to undertake a detailed examination of a specific area of study to determine what is being taught and how so that we can ensure that our students are receiving the best possible training for the ministry. This year Mr. Garry Postma (a long-time elder in the Vineland FRC) and I were appointed to carry out this task. As it was also the TEC's turn to submit an article for the Messenger this month, we thought we would use this opportunity to inform the churches about our visit.

## Some Themes

As I reflect on these two days, several themes come to mind:

### 1. Instruction

As you would expect from an institution of higher learning, much instruction takes place at the seminary. We had the privilege of sitting in on two classes. The first class was taught by our own professor, Dr. G.M. Bilkes, on the Gospel of John. Dr. Bilkes took the students through John 9: the account of the healing of the man born blind. Pastoral applications were made to real life ministry situations, especially when dealing with people who, like the parents of the blind man, hide behind their blindness and inability.

The second class we attended was a "Spiritual Formation" class led by Dr. M. Kelderman with the assistance of Dr. S. Myers and Dr. D. Kranendonk. In advance of the class, the students were given the following scenario: a young pastor observes the wife of an elder mistreating a teenage student in her Sunday School class. When he addresses her, she begins to turn the congregation against him. How should he handle this, keeping in mind certain dynamics in the consistory and congregation? Practical and sound advice was given to students as to how to handle conflict in the church.



Church orderly principles were also laid out and explained.

**2. Preaching**

I had the privilege of delivering a meditation on Matt 5: 4 “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” in the seminary chapel. Following the address, I was asked to field questions on the message from both students and faculty.

We also heard sermons by two international students – one from India and the other from Mexico. It was amazing to hear students preach in a language that is not their mother tongue. After each sermon, three professors offered a critique and suggested ways to improve.

On Wednesday evening, I was privileged to speak at the weekly prayer meeting in the Grand Rapids FRC which was well attended.

**3. Prayer**

After the chapel on Wednesday morning, the students, under the leadership of a faculty member, form groups and gather in various classrooms for a time of prayer. Every class and every meeting we had was also opened and closed with prayer, fostering a sense of dependence on and communion with God.

**4. Fellowship**

In addition to sitting in on classes, we visited with both of our professors – Dr. G.M. Bilkes and Dr. D. Kranendonk and their families in their homes. We also visited our Free Reformed student, Carsten Koopman, and his wife Nadia in their home. He is adjusting well and enjoying his studies. Nadia suffers from MS, but we are thankful for how the Lord is sustaining her and enabling her to serve the church and community in various ways. Please do remember also her in your prayers.



**ELEMENTARY & HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS**  
Teaching applications for the 2024-2025 school year are welcome!



We are looking for enthusiastic, qualified **elementary and high school teachers** who have a passion for Christian education, and submit to the Holy Scriptures as summarized in the Reformed confessions. Seasoned veterans looking for a positive change, or young beginners looking to gain experience are both encouraged to apply.

**ABOUT US:**

- An expanding student body of 350+ students from Kindergarten to Grade 12
- A dedicated parent-run school community
- Strong relationship with local Reformed churches (ARP, FRC, HRC, URC)
- Newer facilities in the rural setting of Mount Elgin, in southwestern Ontario
- A unified, professional staff committed to a Christ-centered education

**HOW TO APPLY:** Applications must include a resume, statement of faith, philosophy of Christian education, and references.

✉ principal@orcschool.ca (Mr. William Van Brugge)  
 🌐 www.orcschool.ca      📞 519-485-1142  
 🏠 333182 Plank Line, Mount Elgin, Ontario. Come visit us!

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

**EBEN-EZER CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**  
**ECCS** in Chatham, ON is actively seeking applications for the following positions for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year:


**Teaching Principal**

**Full and Part time teachers and Educational Assistants.**

**We are also accepting applications for the role of part time resource coordinator, to begin as soon as possible.**

Chatham is a small city in the banana belt of Southwestern Ontario. We have an active school membership and a wonderfully small (but growing) enrollment of 50 students.

For more information or to apply please email [hr@eecsatham.com](mailto:hr@eecsatham.com)

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### 5. Encouragement

We were privileged to support our professors and our students with words of encouragement and support on behalf of our churches. How important this is! Our professors have a weighty task teaching the next generation of preachers. Like all students, Carsten has a demanding workload which requires him to spend many hours each day studying. May the Lord bless these dear brothers in their respective callings!

### 6. Vision

We also met with our professors, as well as the new president of PRTS, Dr. A. Neele. While acknowledging our utter dependence on the Lord's blessing, it was exciting to hear from them their plans for the seminary and areas where they would like to see growth and development. The seminary desires not only to strengthen its programs for the students in Grand Rapids, but also to share the riches entrusted to them with seminaries in many different countries.

### 7. Unity

It was wonderful to see the love and unity between the professors and between the professors and students. We got the sense that everyone is pursuing after the same goal which is to train men and to be trained for "Biblical, experiential and practical ministry." We also came away with a renewed appreciation for the close working relationship we have with the HRC – especially at the level of the Board of Trustees (BoT), which has three FRC members.

### 8. Leadership

With the retirement of Dr. Beeke, the leadership of the seminary has been passed on to Dr. A. Neele (President) and Dr. G.M. Bilkes (Vice President). Both men are capable leaders and scholars who work well together and complement each other. Under the continued blessing of the Lord, we may believe that the seminary remains in good hands.



GROWING YOUR OWN FAMILY AND  
THE CHURCH FAMILY GOD'S WAY



2024 PURITAN REFORMED CONFERENCE  
AUGUST 22-24

### SPEAKERS

Michael Barrett, Joel Beeke,  
Gerald Bilkes, Hensworth W. C. Jonas,  
Jonathan Master, Stephen Myers,  
Richard Phillips

Register at [conference.prts.edu](https://conference.prts.edu)

**Some Reflections**

Overall, as a denomination, we may be very thankful for the seminary and for the instruction that our students have received and hopefully will continue to receive there. It is not perfect. There is still room for improvement, which is true for any institution or organization, educational or otherwise. As TEC labouring on behalf of and under the direction of our churches, we are committed to standing alongside the seminary and offering what advice, input, and assistance we can, also through our representatives on the BoT.

This much is true: our students are receiving a very good education there – perhaps the best in North America – and one that lines up with our denominational distinctives and convictions. May the Lord’s blessing rest upon the seminary, its professors, students, and staff, and may He be pleased to use it to train many more ministers of the gospel for generations to come.

In this connection, Dr. Neele made a comment that left a deep impression on us. He spoke of the burden he has for the vacant churches in the FRC and expressed the hope that one day the pulpits in these churches may be filled with men of God’s choosing. He also said that parents need to pray for their sons – already in their infancy – that one or even more of their sons would be called by the Lord to serve His church as ministers of the gospel. With this we wholeheartedly agree. May God be pleased to raise up from among our sons men who are called and equipped by the Lord for this vitally important work!

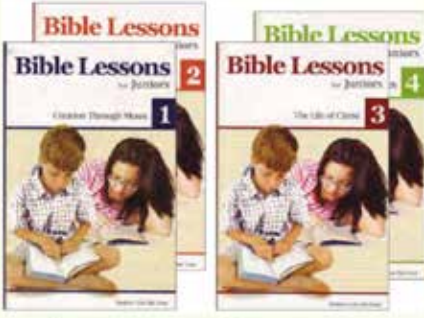
*Rev. J. Schoeman is the chairman of the TEC and an alumnus of PRTS, having graduated in 2000. He and Rev. E. Moerdyk were the first two FRC students to be enrolled at PRTS more than 25 years ago. He is also the pastor of the Emmanuel Free Reformed Church in Abbotsford, BC.*

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 Colossians 3:17

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# ANNOUNCEMENT

## ANNIVERSARY

**April 18, 1964-2024**

We are thankful to the Lord that  
our dear parents,

### **AREND & BETTY OTTEN**

(nee Brouwer)

will be celebrating **60 years of marriage**.

We would like to celebrate their love for the  
Lord, for each other and for others.

*'but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'* Joshua 24:15b



With much love from their children and grandchildren

#### **Marcel & Jeanette Otten**

*Chantel, Jessica, Nathan, Aiden and Tabitha*

#### **Alfred & Christine Otten**

*Cassie & Justin, Nick & Janine, Tawnya & Bram, Shany (Christopher),  
Calvin & Deanna, and Deanna (Liam)*

#### **Edward & Anita Otten**

*Richard & Becky, Melanie & Wes, Rachel (Mark), Vanessa (Jon), Sarah (Justin), Nicole*

#### **Wayne & Brenda Otten**

*Eryn & Kevin, Danielle & Ron, Veronica, Levi, and Jordyn & Jonny*

#### **Jason & Andrea Otten**

*Justine, Trevor, and Natasha & Brandon*

#### **Amanda & Tom Koopman**

*Jeffrey, Carianne, Adam, Caleb*

& 17 Great Grandchildren

We invite you to celebrate with us at an Open House  
on **April 27, 2024** D.V. from 2-4 p.m. at **Zion Free Reformed Church**  
1075 Boyle Rd, Fenwick

**Home address:** 1025 Boyle Rd, Fenwick, ON L0S 1C0

## ANNIVERSARY

With thankful hearts,

### **ANDREW & JOANNE NEVEN**

(nee Brunsveld)

of Dundas, Ontario, Canada,

Remembering God's goodness, celebrate  
their **60th Wedding Anniversary**

April 4, 1964 - April 4, 2024



Children:

**Deani and Michael Van Pelt, Gary and Brenda Neven,  
Drew and Liesl Neven, Jeff and Maria Neven**

*19 Grandchildren (Kenton +2012), 9 Great-grandchildren*

Married on a beautiful snowy day in Dundas Free Reformed Church.

Officiated by Rev Jetse Hamstra Sr. with wedding text:

*"Lord, lift up the light of your countenance upon us."* Psalm 4:6

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Registration closes Wednesday, May 8.