

Young People's Forum

Dear Young People,

I must review briefly what we are discussing so that you can put this article in its proper context. In general, we are talking about the antithesis, which is about various aspects of the believer's calling in this world of sin. How is a believer to live in a wicked world as a child of God?

More particularly, we are talking about what is the calling of a believer in relation to the creation? How must he live in God's world? How ought he to walk in God's world? How must he use God's world? Even more particularly, how must believer use money that God gives him? And how must he use the things that money can buy?

I am somewhat reluctant to talk in detail about these things, because, if God wills, I will be speaking at your Youth Camp that is scheduled to be held December 19-22. Yes, we do plan to come to Singapore once again, as many of you already know. We do have our tickets purchased, although we have tickets purchased for round-trip travel between Grand Rapids and Manila, the Philippines. We hope to see our daughter and son-in-law there and stay with them a week. You all know them: Rev. & Mrs. Daniel Kleyn. We will get separate tickets between Manila and Singapore.

You have asked me to speak on various aspects of the kingdom of heaven in the four speeches I am to deliver at the camp. And particularly, the committee has asked me to speak on some practical aspects of our calling as citizens of the kingdom of heaven. So some of the things I am going to say in this letter I will also be saying in one of those speeches. But I guess that repetition never hurt any one, and you can save these letters and maybe write down questions to ask of me when the speeches are delivered. Mrs. Hanko and I are looking forward to seeing you all once again – which almost certainly will be the last time that we can come to Singapore.

But we must get on with our subject. We have to answer the question of our use of the things of God's creation in the light of some important truths that Scripture teaches us. You know that a Christian's calling is always based on Biblical truths.

Maybe I should pause a minute in our discussion to emphasize this and say a few things about it.

It is frequently the cry of people in the pew who listen to the preaching that they want more practical preaching. They quickly complain that that their big need is for practical preaching and that they do not want doctrinal preaching. They want to know how to live; they do not want to know what truth is. They turn off their brains when the minister starts preaching doctrine and, with a sigh, say to themselves: "Here we go again; what good is doctrine going to do us? We want to know how to live." People, even in a Reformed church, can take a very careless view of doctrine. "Oh," they say, "It is not all that important what a man believes; what is important is how he lives." Or they may say, "I know that so-and-so does not agree with us doctrinally, but that doesn't matter. So-and-so is so sincere and such a nice person that we cannot and will not squabble over some differences in what we believe."

Well that is simply not true. To walk in a Godly way means to walk in liberty; and to walk in liberty means to know and love the truth. Jesus makes it unmistakably clear when he says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Notice, he speaks of "knowing" the truth; and our Lord finds that true liberty is to be found only in knowing the truth.

I hope you do not mind this digression, for I consider it to be very important. We can easily illustrate why doctrine determines practice. Take, for example evolutionism. If one is an evolutionist and really believes that man developed from a monkey, then there is no such thing as God telling man what is right and what is wrong, for a monkey cannot be a moral creature. This is the reason why in our world today right and wrong no longer exist, except in terms of what is good for the human race as a whole, not what is pleasing to God. If one believes in a conditional covenant, as the Free Reformed Church of Australia does, then marriage, which is also a covenant and a picture of God's covenant with his people, is conditional and divorce and remarriage are not wrong.

Doctrine is important, and one cannot have practical preaching without doctrinal preaching. We must not jump over doctrine to get at practice. I noticed in the material that the Committee for the Youth Camp wants some doctrinal teachings on the kingdom before getting into the practical implications. I was thrilled by the discernment of the committee and appreciate their emphasis.

So what are the truths of Scripture that are important in connection with our use of God's world in general and money in particular?

--This present world is God's creation, which he upholds and sustains by his providence and in which he works out his own eternal purpose, which is the kingdom of heaven in which is a new heaven and a new earth..

--The devil attempts to steal this creation for himself, uses the wicked world as his representatives in the world, and corrupts everything in it.

--Because of the corruption of this world by the wicked, it will all be burned with fire and destroyed.

--Out of the ashes of that cosmic conflagration, God will make a new earth along with a new heaven, for, as Scripture repeatedly admonishes us, we shall inherit the earth. (See for example, Matthew 5:3)

--The kingdom of heaven that shall come with Christ's return is revealed now on this earth in the church, missions, the care of the poor, covenant education of children, and the godly walk of God's people.

--God's people are pilgrims and strangers in the earth who have here no abiding city, but who travel towards their everlasting destination, the house of their Father. This present world is only a temporary place where we make our way to heaven.

--The things that belong to this world have no abiding value in themselves, but are to be used by the Christian citizen of the kingdom of heaven to make his journey to heaven possible. It

is like being a guest of a citizen in Malaysia and being fed by the people who live in the house while we stay there, but we are on a trip that takes us to Singapore, where our home is. We use for a time the things that belong to the people in the house; we sanctify them by prayer and the Word of God; but we leave them behind when it is time to go home.

These are the principles. We shall see what the practical implications of these principles are in our next letter.

Warmest regards,

Prof