



# salt shakers

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Hello, and welcome to another issue of Salt Shakers! We hope you are excited to read the many articles within and may our Lord be pleased to use this magazine for the cause of His Kingdom and to edify His children. Appetiser below!

Are you a boastful Christian?

In recent days, much attention has been on a Singaporean church because of their dealings in commercial matters as well as their methods of “fund raising” during church services. I am not here to dissect the matter and give judgement, but they come to mind because I had the privilege of viewing some excerpts of a fund raising sermon by their pastor. In the sermon, the pastor continuously brought up examples of members in their church who had made huge sacrifices so that they could donate large sums of money to the building fund. He boasted on behalf of sick people who “coughed” up large sums in spite of their tremendous hospital bills. He boasted on behalf of a family who sold their home and bought a smaller one so that they could donate the difference to the fund. He boasted on behalf of a youth who sold his favourite motorcycle to give to the fund. The point of this was that the pastor brought up names of those people, and elevated them, so that everyone could see how sacrificial and giving they were. The pastor was certainly boastful, though I must add, not about himself.

Then, there are those who boast about themselves continuously. And, there are those who for fear of being called “proud” or “boastful” fail to even squeak about anything positive in their lives. They are so “humble” that there is nothing worth talking about their lives. How should Christians be? Christians MUST be boosters. And if that sounds wrong, hear this: Christians MUST be boosters AT ALL TIMES. And if you can’t take it, read Psalm 44:8, and think about it.

The preceding verses show immense sensitivity on the part of the Psalmist (and his fathers), to see God’s working in everything that happened around him. They acknowledged God to such an extent that they were almost “afraid” to take credit for anything! They placed no confidence in their strength, methods, or tools. But rather, they KNEW that their God was responsible for everything! Nothing was theirs that was not given by God. And so the boasting starts. Of course, it is a boasting in God, and His mighty works. This boasting is a natural, logical, and inevitable outcome for a child of God. In fact, it would be strange if a Christian had nothing to boast about at all! The children of Israel boasted about their deliverance from their enemies; we MUST boast about ours, our enemies of sin and death. We MUST boast about everything that God has given us.

A Christian, who must be quite adept at boasting in God since he does that all day long, will also become very sensitive to other kinds of boasting. Are others boasting about our God? Or are they boasting about themselves, or someone else? Is God being glorified, or is man being put on a pedestal? Should we join in this kind of boasting?

Are you a boastful Christian?

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Christ regardless, paul

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# The Importance of Personal Devotions I

>> Prof. Hanko

## Introduction

I think it was the last time Mrs. Hanko and I were in Singapore that I was asked to contribute one or more articles on the subject of personal devotions. I had forgotten all about it until Josiah kindly reminded me of my unfulfilled promise. I consider the subject an extremely important one and am happy to write for Salt Shakers.

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, where a lot of my children studied for either all or a significant part of their primary education, had a teacher in the Sixth Grade, who was one of these “born teachers.” Some teachers are that way. They receive gifts from God that sets them aside from others as having all those gifts that are necessary to teach children effectively and in a God-fearing manner. They really do not need any education in how to teach. They just know. She was in Hope School for many years, and most, if not all, my children enjoyed her instruction as they passed through the Sixth Grade.

I mention this because she taught the children the importance of devotions in their lives. She prepared calendar charts of each month with each day of the month on them. She prepared one for each child. The children were required to practice personal and private devotions every day of the month. They were to fill in the space on the chart for that day with the Scripture passage they read and some of the things they had told the Lord in their prayers. Many of these children, under her direction and encouragement, formed life-long habits of personal devotions that continue to the present. Mrs. Hanko and I are thankful for what she did for our children and for all the children of the covenant.

## Scripture’s Mention of Private Devotions

Although the Bible does not, so far as I know, use the term “personal devotions,” such practices are referred to in other ways in many different places in Scripture. I can mention a few. We read that Job, when he had received all the bad news of the destruction of all his possessions and the death of all his children, “arose, rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped (Job 1:20).

The Psalms often speak of the personal and private prayers the Psalmists made to God. But they speak too, of more than prayer. For example, in Psalm 77, the Psalmist was so troubled that he was convinced that God had ceased to love him and had abandoned him. But then he recovered from this dreadful state of mind. He tells us: “This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings” (Psalm 77:10-12).

The Psalmist found relief in calling to mind God’s great works, meditating on them and speaking to God of them. These great works of God were, of course, to be found in those books of the Bible that the Psalmist possessed in those days.

Our Lord gives special instruction to us for the prayers we are to make; but also mentions our own private devotions. In Matthew 6:6 he speaks especially of these private devotions: “But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”

When messengers came to Peter from Cornelius while Peter was staying in Joppa, “as they drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour” (Acts 10:9). Peter was not aware of the fact that these messengers from Cornelius were coming, but he was waiting for dinner and spent the time in private prayer.

### What Devotions Are

The word “devotions” is the noun of the adjective “devout” and the verb “devote.” All these words mean “dedication,” “consecration” or, “piety” and refer to worship. It is this last point that needs emphasis. To practice devotions is to worship God.

To worship God is to enter consciously into God’s presence so that we are in God’s presence with our minds and souls. We cannot come bodily or geographically into God’s presence. So, to engage in devotions is to enter into God’s presence in our minds and hearts.

Now, it is possible, of course, to go through the motions of devotions and not really to engage in them; we go through the ritual, but our minds are on many different things. This is what the Bible calls “Lip-service,” and is something particularly abominable to God (Isaiah 1:11-16). It is possible for us, even though we are on earth and God is in heaven, to enter into his presence when we think of him as the Scriptures tell of him and speak to him as if we were together

conversing about various things. It is a great blessing that God gives us. He makes it possible for us to do this, because he gives us the Holy Spirit in our hearts (Romans 8:15, 23, 25, 27).

There are many ways in which the child of God has devotions. He has devotions in church on the Lord’s Day, when in singing, praying and listening to God’s Word he is consciously in God’s presence. He has devotions with his family when parents and children gather to read the Scriptures and pray – and, perhaps, sing. He has devotions when he meets with fellow saints for Bible study; or when he and one or more friends pray together. Always, devotions are coming consciously into God’s presence.

But the Bible speaks also of private devotions; that is, devotions in which a child of God is alone with his God. That is what we want to talk about in this and a following article, or articles.

### Why Devotions Are Important

We need devotions because we are still very sinful and imperfect people. It is our calling to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. That means we are to love God all the time, every moment of our lives. In heaven this will be possible, for we will see our Lord face to face and we will be every moment consciously serving our God. But, while we are on earth, we cannot attain to such heights of devotion.

We are too busy with our studies, our entertainment, our obligations at work, all the other things that occupy our time and energy. For hours on end and even days we do not even think about God or about our calling to be dedicated to him. And so we need to set aside certain periods in the day to put out of our minds all our daily distractions that occupy so much of our time, so that we can come to God

and live in covenant fellowship with him in our devotions.

Such devotions are crucially important and we cannot survive spiritually without them.

Although we will talk more about devotions in another article, here are some questions that you can answer and use as good subjects to talk about with your fellow saints.

### Questions of discussion

1. Look up the text in Psalm 77 that I referred to in the article and explain what it means to “meditate” upon God’s mighty works. How do we meditate?
2. Why does the Psalm speak of meditating on God’s mighty “works”? The Psalmist was in deep spiritual trouble when he wrote this Psalm, (Read from the beginning of the Psalm how deep his troubles were.) How did meditation on God’s mighty works help him spiritually to escape his troubles?
3. If you have found the answer to question 2, then answer this question: Is it possible to conclude that God’s mighty works are for other saints and not for me? What then do we do?
4. Are their differences in our prayers and the contents of our prayers in our own private devotions from the devotions of a family, or the devotions of a child of God in the worship services?
5. If you conclude that there are differences, then be specific as to what these differences are.
6. Read Isaiah 1:11-16 and answer how our own sin of lip-service is really the same as Israel’s sin.

## Introduction

The Lord willing, I will write regularly in this youth magazine, “The Salt Shaker”, under the section entitled, “CLEANING CORNER”.

Recently, there have been announcements in our Church regarding young people helping to clean up the dishes after lunch. We should try to finish our food and hand in the dishes to the “cleaning corner” by 1 p.m. for cleaning up. Regular cleaning up is good to maintain a clean and healthy environment, especially for further and better use in the future.

So our effort in producing the “Salt Shaker” shall not be in vain when we have such a “CLEANING CORNER” to clean up any ‘contamination’.

Please pray that I may be enabled to keep up writing here in this corner and that the readers may be blessed from reading it prayerfully.

## The Inevitable Contamination

The word, “contamination” suggests a stage of change from something better to something worse. So excessive CO2 emission resulting in climate change and other worldwide, evil consequences contaminates our atmosphere. We do not like contamination. We must try to avoid it as much as possible. But, alas, more often than not, a little contamination is inevitable, if we are to remain active and useful.

This is also true in spiritual matters. A so-called Christian can be totally uninterested in spiritual things. He only goes to church because he has to according to home rules, not because of the love for the Lord. There is no concern that the Church should preach the right doctrines nor that her members should live according to those teachings for their own well-being! They just live and let live - each according to what is right in his own eyes. There is no fear of God or reverence for His Word. Such a person may imagine himself to be morally clean and does not need any cleansing of any kind. But, the truth is, as the Word of God states, there is none righteous, no, not one.

We all become inevitably unclean through contamination whether we like it or not, aware of it or not. We become more aware of this contamination in the service of the Lord. So the most active Apostle wrote that he was the chief of all sinners.

So, are you now afraid to serve the Lord because you rather not know that you are contaminated and need cleansing? We are in deep trouble when we cannot face the truth of our contamination and keep deceiving ourselves thinking that we're alright and doing fine. It is better to serve the Lord, know the truth and experience His cleansing Power, than to live unthankful lives.

## The Need For Cleansing

If contamination with sins is inevitable as we live in this life, cleansing must be a matter of necessity.

“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” Psa. 119:9

We are spiritually alive only because our sins are forgiven us. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who died for our sins. A Christian life that does not touch on our sinful, sensitive self cannot be genuine. True religion deals with the matter of sins and guilt, as God would want us to. It is the mishandling of such matters with false teachings that leads to all kinds of psychological problems in life. True religion teaches doctrines that are most healthy in all aspects of life, including our mental health. Psychiatrists who advise patients against Christianity are sinning against God greatly.

The bottom line in dealing with sins is that they must be identified, confessed and removed as soon as possible and as long as necessary. Something is radically wrong when a pilgrim becomes weary and tired of, and ready to give up on, dealing with his sins. If proper dealing of sins leads to greater and more love for Jesus, a believer cannot be tired of dealing with sins in his life.

### **The Importance Of This Corner**

As we serve the Lord whom we love for loving us in producing this magazine, we become dirty because we are imperfect and do sin while trying to do good. Through the blood of Christ we experience His cleansing power to the great delight of our soul. This is God's plan for our sanctification which we must not resist.

Reading this magazine, it is our prayer that we may be cleansed spiritually to the good health of our souls. Thus the importance of this Cleansing Corners department, where our sins and infirmities in service will be dealt with. So we are encouraged not to miss this section of the magazine when reading it.

As our Lord and Saviour gave His life for our sins, we should never treat sin lightly whenever it rears its ugly head. We must deal with them faithfully if we do not want to displease the Lord. In fact such humble attitude glorifies Christ.

When we deal with sin as we serve, there is no occasion for pride and that enhances the effectiveness of the service, for ourselves as well as for others. Finally, we must say that 'Salt Shaker' is meant to dispense that which is useful for the preservation and tastefulness of God's people in this world. Cleansing keeps us healthy and appetizing.

### **Conclusion:**

Read this corner. Pray for it to be faithful in writing. Help out by asking and suggesting.

God bless.

From the age of two, I went to school like most Singaporean kids, completed PSLE and started secondary school. While in primary school we had contemplated homeschooling but did not take it up because my father objected, concerned about my future. About four months into secondary school my mum started reading up about homeschooling again. My family prayed about it, and with my dad's approval I began homeschooling in April 2008.

# homeschooling >> Joanna Tang

So why did I/we decide to homeschool? My parents wanted to properly obey God's command in Deuteronomy 6:7, which says "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." It is almost impossible for parents to bring up their children in the Lord when they are in school for almost the whole day and have tons of homework to complete when they get home. Furthermore, God calls covenant parents, not the government, to train up their children in His ways so that they will not depart from it (Prov 22:6). Homeschooling also allows us to choose a Christian curriculum, which will ground me more firmly in the faith, keeping me close to God and enabling me to be a better witness for Him. Money is not a problem because you do not have to choose an expensive curriculum.

A typical day of mine starts with personal devotions, breakfast, and then devotions with my mum and brother. After chores I'll start my lessons, with breaks in between for lunch and rest. A big challenge I face is discipline. It's tough at times to focus on my lessons and complete all my assignments on time. Also, there is the temptation to cheat as I have all the answer keys on hand.

Many think homeschoolers don't have a social life, but that's not true. The Singapore Homeschooling Group is very active and regularly organizes activities and outings where homeschoolers get to meet and socialize. In fact, if I attended all the activities organized, I wouldn't have any time for my schoolwork.

I've enjoyed homeschooling very much and have never regretted it. I really hope the number of homeschoolers in our church grows!

# Distinctively Reformed

>> Aaron Lim

## A Case for Doctrinal Distinctives

Reformed churches, since the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, have been in grave danger of sacrificing their faith. The days of the Reformation were marked by severe persecution upon those who opposed Rome and all her idolatry. Rome never hesitated to make martyrs out of her enemies. Persecution for Reformed churches today takes on a slightly different form. Reformed churches are forced to compromise on their witness to the truth. Great pressure is heaped upon Reformed believers and clergies to be tolerant of false doctrine. Under the false piety of Christian love, Reformed churches are compelled to be accepting towards churches of differing doctrinal persuasions. Anyone who refuses would be labeled arrogant and unforgiving. Tolerance is the ecclesiastical password to be accepted in the modern church world.

Prof. Herman Hanko of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America writes,

“Sad to say, the church has always been plagued with these great compromisers. They are almost more dangerous than outright heretics, for they sell the truth under the guise of toleration, love for brethren, and desire to be known as peacemakers” (pg 169, *Contending for the Faith*, RFPA, 2010).

As if calling ourselves Reformed were already not being exclusive, many shun the idea of developing the church’s doctrine for fear of being given unfriendly labels. Church leaders hesitate to maintain distinctive doctrinal standards for fear of offending others. As a result, the doctrines and practices which give the Reformed faith its unique power and vitality are compromised. The Reformed church sacrifices the truth on the altar of tolerance.

God’s Word is clear for the Reformed believer to “buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23). Wisdom, instruction and understanding are all products of his priceless purchase of the truth. The Reformed man uses all his talents and gifts God has given him to acquire as much of the truth as possible. Like the wise man who upon finding a pearl of great price, sells all that he has to purchase it (Matt 13:46). He learns it, studies it, confesses it, defends it and hides in his heart (Ps 119:11). Above all, he refuses to sell his purchase because it is God’s priceless gift to him.

## What then are doctrinal distinctives?

They are the doctrines and practices which give the Reformed faith its rich meaning and uniqueness. They are the doctrines of sovereign, particular grace which proclaim a mighty and sovereign God in the salvation of sinners. They are the doctrines of God’s unconditional covenant which he sovereignly establishes



with his elect in the cross of Jesus Christ. In sum, they are the deep truths of Scripture that have been passed down to us with the sweat and struggle of our spiritual fathers.

Consider the following 4 statements:

1. God saves sinners.
2. God saves sinners in the cross of Jesus Christ.
3. God saves His elect sinners in cross of Jesus Christ.
4. God saves His elect sinners in the cross of Jesus Christ by His grace alone.

Each statement is true from a biblical point of view. Yet each successive statement increases with detail and precision. Each statement increases in depth and meaning which stem from the rich fountain of Scripture. They give us a fuller understanding of the doctrine of salvation. Such is an example to develop the truth in sharper clarity and deeper meaning.

It would be extreme unfaithfulness on the part of a Reformed church to be satisfied with a shallow understanding of the truth. More than 400 years

have passed since the days of the Reformation. The Reformed faith has since developed in great depth, clarity and beauty. Doctrines which were unheard of in the past have been forged in the fires of controversies and intense spiritual struggles. It is nothing less than the duty of those who call themselves Reformed to carry on the legacy of doctrinal development.

To be doctrinally distinctive is not an easy course to take. On the one hand there are those in the church who have no genuine love for the truth. They are the Esaus of the covenant who, although, have been raised under the instruction of the church, despise all that they were taught. When the church develops the truth and confesses it with boldness and clarity, this wicked element are forced to reveal their true natures. On the other hand there are those outside the church who oppose her with an intense hatred. The bolder she confesses the truth of God, the more intense this hatred will be. Persecution is inevitable.

That many Reformed churches have been engulfed by a tolerant and liberal spirit is not surprising. Scripture speaks of those who “will

not endure sound doctrine...[who] turn their ears away from the truth” (2 Tim 4:3-4). These churches have almost no interest in the development of the truth. Under the false notion of Christian unity, they join hands with all sorts of churches. Without any thought of the spiritual consequences, they freely allow exchanges of pulpit with each other. Ministers perform the sacraments for each other’s churches and discipline standards slip. Yet, they are not alarmed as unity is more important to them than the truth.

Prof. Hanko hits the nail squarely on the head with these words, “the salvation of the church lies in her intolerance - intolerance of all that is contrary to God’s truth in Christ” (pg 21). May we who have been so blessed to receive the Reformed truth learn this intolerance from our fathers of old. Our comfort comes from the Spirit of God who alone will lead the church into all truth (Jn 16:13). For the love of the truth, for the glory of God, the Reformed church must be doctrinally distinctive.

In the next article, the Lord willing, we will explore the reasons for maintaining doctrinal distinctives in the church of Jesus Christ.

# Remember Lot's Wife

>> Pastor Paul Goh

Dear Covenant young people,

Our Lord Jesus Christ commands his disciples to remember Lot's wife. He was speaking of this in the context of his Second Coming. He was exhorting the disciples that when that day comes and if they are upon the housetops or in the fields they ought not to return unto their homes to take their stuff. And then our Lord commands "Remember Lot's wife". This command brings us back to Genesis 19, when God was about to destroy the city of Sodom for their wickedness of homosexuality. He commanded Lot and his family to flee. And while they were fleeing, Lot's wife looked back and she was turned into a pillar of salt!

The Word of God that confronts us today is a solemn word. It is solemn because a woman turned into a pillar of salt! This is not an ordinary occurrence that God turns a woman into a pillar of salt. She was a wife in a covenant family and enjoyed many of the spiritual privileges of the Christian home. And in spite of all that, all her spiritual privileges did not benefit her when it all mattered. What was her sin? What wrong did she do? Her sin was that she was reluctant to leave the sinful city of Sodom, all her friends and all her belongings behind. The point of this passage of God's word in Luke chapter 17, verse 32 is that godly young people are to be willing to obey the Lord to the extent of giving up their possessions, desires and even their very lives for the Lord's sake.

Young people, there are three things that we want to notice from this text. Firstly, the great spiritual privileges that Lot's wife enjoyed. Secondly, the sin of Lot's wife, and finally, the judgment that she received.

Firstly, the great spiritual privileges that Lot's wife enjoyed.

Christ commands us to remember Lot's wife. She lives in a covenant home. A home where God is the heart of their home and its conversation and its members of this household knows, believes and loves Jehovah. She is the wife of Lot, whom the Bible calls a righteous man (II Peter 2.7-8). Scripture informs us of the godliness of this man when it says that he was tormented with the filthy communication and deeds of the wicked. Lot, in turn was the nephew of Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham is a man of God, whom Jehovah called out of the Ur of the Chaldees, an idolatrous nation, to give him a land of promise, called Canaan. And God promised Abraham that he would bless Abraham that he will be a great nation and great name. And those who bless Abraham, God will bless; and whosoever will curse Abraham, God will likewise curse. The most outstanding event in his life is that God made a covenant with him, his children and his children's children. And in this covenant God gave the land of promise to Abraham and his seed to dwell in and his seed will be as numerous as the sand of the seashore. Lot's wife must have known all these wonderful history of God's graciousness as she was surrounded by these godly men, Lot and Abraham. But, did all these spiritual influences benefit her spiritually? It did not. That's the occasion of which Christ commands us, "Remember Lot's wife".

Young people, you might be born in a covenant home. And let me emphasise to you that it is a great privilege to be born in a covenant home, where godly parents teach you the word of God from a very tender age you, provide you a

godly example so that you can live a life that is pleasing in the sight of God. And let us not forget that your parents brought you to be baptised as an infant. But, these privileges alone cannot save you from your sins. What really matters is grace: when God, by his grace, implants a new heart in you that is after righteousness and holiness. And so, young people, with all seriousness you must earnestly pray that you know Christ personally in your heart, otherwise, you will not be saved. Membership in a church will not save you; neither will baptism nor attending catechism classes, but only by new birth is one saved.

Secondly, let us consider why Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. The simple answer is that she sinned against the Lord. It was very urgent that Lot and his family leave for the city of Zoar immediately. But as they were fleeing, she looked back and was immediately turned into a pillar of salt. Her look was not a look of innocence but it was a look of loving the present world. She had grown to love the city of Sodom and her neighbours, and she was not willing to part with her possessions. In other words, it was a look of worldliness and of coveting the things in the world. She had the world in her heart.

Young people, you also face a similar danger. It is unprecedented that you possess so many things: smartphones, digital cameras, laptop computers, and so on. There is nothing wrong to possess all these digital toys but these things become a sin when they become an idol in your heart and therefore become a snare to you. And so your attitude to all these toys is that you must be willing to forego it when the Lord calls you to. You are willing to give it up because you love

the Lord and want to serve Him and you would not allow anything to come in between you and your God.

Her second sin was disobedience to the word of the angel. She looked back after the angel commanded her not to look back. Young people, there is a tendency that we overlook obedience to God and consider disobedience a very small matter.

For disobedience, the whole mankind was plunged into sin and the result is that man is totally depraved, cursed by God and hell-bound. For disobedience, God did not accept the offering of Cain because he disobeyed God in offering his own works instead of a bloody sacrifice. For disobedience, God sent his only begotten Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross. For disobedience to his calling, God deposed Saul from being king because he offered a sacrifice which was not his to offer but the priest's. For disobedience, Israel and Judah were sent into captivity. And for disobedience, this present world will be destroyed in order to be cleansed from its sin and its filthiness. So, disobedience is a very serious matter to God. For disobedience, Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Remember Lot's wife.

Finally, let us notice the judgment of God that came upon Lot's wife. Scripture informs us that that moment she looked back, she turned into pillar of salt. Lot and his three daughters must have been very shocked to see their wife and mother turned into a pillar of salt. The fear of God must have filled their souls for this solemn event. God's judgment upon Lot's wife was immediate and without warning. This shows us that God took her looking back into the city of Sodom

as a serious sin which demanded immediate attention. And thus, she was turned into a pillar of salt. A pillar is an object which is permanent and cannot be easily destroyed. This pillar will serve as a memorial of a solemn event that took place and will prompt others to enquire about its meaning. This will give an opportunity for parents to explain the judgment of God that came upon a woman who was Lot's wife. Lot's wife was eternally lost. There was no heaven for her, but hell.

Young people, there is a serious message for you. Never entertain the thought that it is alright for a Christian to be worldly and to love his present world with all its evil lusts. Instead, may the sudden destruction of Lot's wife serve as an encouragement to you to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to be a man or a woman filled with the fear of God. May you be willing to give up everything for the sake of obeying your Lord, even to the extent of laying down your life for Him. Amen.

# QUIT YOU LIKE MEN

&gt;&gt; Rev. Koole

Volume 85, Issue 18 Meditation

Rev. Koole is pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan. Rev. Kenneth Koole's final duty as president of Synod 2008 was to preach the pre-synodical sermon for Synod 2009. As it happened, the service was canceled because of inclement weather conditions. The sermon was therefore unpreached. But it appears nevertheless in Meditation-form in this issue of the SB and the next. In view of the fact that Synod recessed on June 16, and will reconvene in August to deal with the 'school issue' that dominated this year's agenda, Rev. Koole's exposition of can still serve as an edifying word setting the tone for the rest of Synod 2009. What is printed here is the first point of the sermon. The second and third points will be published in the August issue.

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity.”

I Corinthians 16:13, 14 Men and brethren, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church of Corinth was a troubled church. Any number of evils were loose in that congregation. Special interest groups had their own agenda, challenging apostolic authority; sexual immoralities were winked at; drunkenness was found at the Lord's table. As a result, the Corinthian church was making an extremely poor witness to the world as to any real difference between the Christian faith and ungodly society itself. Unbelievers said, “This is Christian behavior? We can take you to our marketplace, where people behave and speak no worse than you Christians, and they may be even more trustworthy. If this is what belonging to the Christian church means, all this evil speech and slander and the absence of peace and unity, we want no part of it. We have enough division and bitterness towards each other in our own ungodly families without adding that of your church to ours!”

All this largely because officebearers were shirking their duty and failing to take the apostolic Word and apply it with vigor to the life and doctrine of the congregation. And if you were to worship in the Corinthian church, you would have found chaos and confusion. Any number were trying to out-shout each other, claiming that their gifts and authority of the Spirit outweighed all the others. Decency and good order were not the order of the day.

As the apostle points out in chapter 14, if outsiders were to visit and observe what was happening in their assemblies, they would think the Christians mad. “Let's get some order in this church of yours, officebearers!” Adding to the disorder were women who refused to keep silence in the church, women who insisted on an equal right to govern the affairs of the church. This the apostle sharply opposed. “Let your women keep silence in the church” (v. 34).

But who was going to see to that, insisting that these loud, assertive women submit, directing them back to their place in the church? Who had enough manhood for that! Who if not the officebearers of the church?

Men and brethren, quit you, behave yourselves, like men. Take the lead; address the weaknesses and sins of God's people; refute the doctrinal errors. Show the church and the world what true manhood, sanctified and redeemed manhood, is all about. What the apostle speaks of here is the need of the hour in the church of Christ. She needs those who will 'play the man.' Not playing at being a man, while behaving like an irresponsible child, but playing the man, filling the part, doing what God made the male of the race to accomplish to begin with.

Understand, I did not select these verses because I think our churches lack such men, or that our churches are in trouble like that of the church of Corinth. Not at all. True, from our agenda it is apparent that we have an issue to deal with that is unsettling our churches at the time, but nothing of the magnitude of the issues troubling the church of Corinth. Rather, I selected this passage because we as delegated officebearers who represent all of our churches must “quit ourselves like men” if we are to prevent the great issues and evils of our apostate ecclesiastical age from entering our beloved congregations and our broader assemblies as well. We are to take the apostle’s exhortation to heart for the sake of true unity and peace, for maintaining a distinctive witness, and for the purity of the gospel of truth.

It is where the church of Christ has men who function as men that she provides a good environment, one in which to grow spiritually and raise a family, one where spiritual maturity and peace prevail. So, men and brethren:

Quit You Like Men

1. What the Apostle Means by This

2. Why This Is the Need of the Hour

3. What Great Incentive Is Given

There is a dearth in this land of ours.

There is a dearth in the church of our day and age.

It is a dearth of men, of those who will ‘play the man.’

There are plenty of women willing to ‘play the man’; women who thrust themselves forward; women who have much to say about running affairs in home and church. But where are the men? One could almost wish that some men would study these forward women and take a lesson or two on how to assert themselves and act like men.

And yet that’s not the remedy either, is it. Such women, for all their manly traits, are out of place. They are the source of endless confusion. Men step aside and the church becomes emasculated. The very presence of these women in places of authority in the House of God means that already the Word of our Lord and the authority of our King has been shoved aside. Where they are seated in assemblies you can be sure that vital concessions concerning the apostolic word have already been made, and every concession will be sure to follow.

What is instructive for us is the word that the apostle uses here and which the A.V. translates by the phrase “Quit you like men.” It is one composite Greek word. It is not derived from the common Greek word that is translated as ‘man’ or ‘mankind’—the word *anthropos*. Rather, the apostle uses a gender-specific word that refers specifically to the male in distinction from the female. It is a word that could be translated as “be the male,” or “be men,” or “behave as men should.” Or, to use King James language, “Quit (that is, Acquit) you like men,” instead of behaving as if you are neutered and do not dare to confront a mouse.

Significantly joined to this gender-specific word is the Greek word for courage. This sets the direction that the apostle has in mind and tells us why, in large part, God created men as males. True manhood has to do with courage. Courage to do what? What else but to face danger and that which threatens life, family, and kingdom, and not to be easily intimidated or collapse in fear. That is all part of true male headship. Scripture itself exalts our Lord Christ as a warrior—king and lion with this connotation.

As you know, in ancient times, both in pagan society and in the nation of Israel herself, the strong desire of parents, wives as well as husbands, was to have sons, and not a few. Why? For the sake of the inheritance, you say. That’s true. Having a son had everything to do with keeping one’s property in the family and continuing one’s name. Ask any royal house or patriarch. But there was more to it than that. In those days of warfare by hand-to-hand combat it was in those sons—an abundance of stalwart, manly sons—that resided the very safety of one’s nation and home, safety from the invading foe or marauding bands. Without those sons, sons of courage schooled in the skills of weaponry, no one was safe—not one’s wife, not one’s daughters, not one’s way of life itself. One would simply have been swept from the land, lives ending in death or slavery. Fathers and sons in sufficient number had everything to do with a people’s protection and security.

That is how it was in biblical times for the nations. So it is for the church of Christ herself in the New Testament age. The apostle’s point is that true manhood has everything to do with courage to withstand evils and errors and to take a

stand for what is right for the preservation of the church. Therein lies the keeping of our inheritance as churches.

The apostle is talking here, of course, not simply of natural manhood. That, for all its displays of natural courage, is yet prone to be self-centered and self-serving. Rather, he is referring to redeemed and sanctified manhood. Fallen manhood is prone to display itself either in domineering, dictatorial ways—"I run the show!"—or in irresponsible fashion, never growing up. Not so, redeemed manhood. Redeemed manhood uses its strength of character and resolution of will not for self, but with others in mind, for loved ones, for their protection and well-being.

I have it on good record that in the Netherlands on many tombstones of young soldiers of the Reformed faith who died in WW II are written the words, "For Country, Family, and Church." They put their life on the line with the church itself in mind, for her continued freedom to worship in accordance with the apostolic word, which Nazism would never have allowed. How many young men in the Netherlands, so deep in apostasy, would you find with that perspective today one wonders. "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets!"

Courage, then, brethren. The willingness to behave as men is the need of the hour for the name and well-being of Christ's church. And let it begin over against the spirit of feminism so prevalent today. Let us not be ashamed to be one of the increasingly rare ecclesiastical assemblies where women are excluded as delegates, an assembly just of men, and one, mind you, that represents a denomination that not only does not allow women to hold office, but not even to vote in church affairs! Can such a species of Christians still exist? A hew and cry goes up. How long civil law will permit such remains to be seen. Many roundly castigate us.

## "What! You think women are inferior to you men? You male chauvinists, you!"

No, good brethren, not inferior at all. In fact, in certain areas of life they are much our superiors, as any married man with children knows. It is not a matter of their not being our equals, it is a matter of their being different, God be thanked! God be thanked that the church of Christ is not composed simply of males or of those who want to think as a man or react to everything like a man. Where would the counter-balance be? Such would be an impoverished and diminishing church (yes, in numbers too!), I will tell you that. If you don't believe it, check the condition of any number of churches where the feminist spirit dominates today.

Why will we not allow women as delegates? Because when it comes to authority in the church and home this same apostle made plain elsewhere, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12). This means women of Christ's church must not think to govern affairs in the church. And the apostle's point is, where believing men function as men and do not abdicate their calling and place, women will not need to 'run the show.' They will not want to. They will have men to answer to their needs. And where such men are found, we find happy wives and women, satisfied and secure!

Do not get me wrong, the apostle does not mean women have no input into the affairs of the church, no voice. They do, but it is in the biblically approved way, namely, through their husbands and men of the church. The wise husband listens carefully to his spouse. But when it comes to governing affairs of the church, it is the role of the man. Brethren, do we have the courage to oppose the feminist agenda on every front? I trust we do. We must take the same stand Paul took when it came to some insisting Titus be circumcised. "[T]o whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour" (Gal. 2:5).

From the apostle's exhortations it is plain that functioning as a man in the church means that one is doing some assessing on his own and making independent judgments, in the sense of not letting someone else do his thinking for him. As the apostle says, "Watch!"—that is, "Be on the alert!" and like a sentry on a city wall make your assessment and respond accordingly. At the same time, let us not mistake the apostle here as though he is advocating that we all come to our own conclusions about matters, and then, regardless of what others think, go our own independent way. Nothing of the sort.

Let us remember that true, sanctified manhood comes to expression within the oneness of the body of Christ. It has everything to do with a recognition of the Spirit of Christ in others, an interest in listening to the others, and even deferring in various matters.

In this connection, I draw your attention to the verse preceding our own, verse 12. As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come

when he shall have convenient time. That's quite a verse. Unable to free himself from Ephesus to go to Corinth at the time, Paul urges Apollos, a fellow preacher, to get himself to Corinth as soon as possible. Apollos considers it and decides not to. He disagrees with the apostle on this matter. What is going on? If an apostle had told you to secure passage on the next ship leaving Ephesus' port city, would you have refused? Would I? Apollos did.

Let us understand well that the power of the passage is not that Apollos held his own counsel. The power of the passage is that the apostle allowed it. Why? Because, in the first place, Paul was not dealing here with a principle matter, a matter of biblical doctrine. When it came to such matters, the apostle suffered no one to disagree with him in a misbegotten spirit of brotherhood. He had no tolerance for the attitude of modern churchmen, "You view the authority of the apostolic doctrines as you want to view them. I'll view them as I want to. We will just agree to disagree and in brotherly fashion allow these various views in the church."

Nonsense! This was the same apostle, remember, who withstood a fellow apostle to the face, Simon Peter by name. He did so when Peter caved in to Judaism and withdrew himself from the Gentile Christians and would not eat with them, leaving the impression that they were unclean and their spirituality suspect, not measuring up to the Jewish brothers' standards. As Paul declares, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11).

And the apostle Peter deferred to Paul, acknowledging he had erred. But, with Apollos, when it came to a practical matter, dealing with what was in the best interest of the churches at that time, the apostle did not pull rank, so to speak, but recognized that Apollos was a fellow officebearer, one who also had the Holy Spirit, and was able to make judgments and assessments.

But let us be clear. The power of the reference is not that it promotes the right of officebearers in Christ's church to disagree with the apostles when their spirit moves them, for officebearers to say "Apollos was an independent thinker, so am I. He disagreed with the apostles, so I may too. I am free to reexamine everything they taught. All the apostolic teachings are up for grabs."

Nonsense! For such men one word is appropriate. It is found towards the conclusion of our chapter, in verse 24. It is the word "Anathema," which means, condemned and dismissed from the church of Christ.

No, the power of verse 12 as it has bearing on our text is not that it sponsors autonomy of thinking in the church, "because, after all, I am a man." Rather, verse 12 indicates that the apostles themselves were keenly aware of the presence of Christ's Spirit in fellow officebearers as they labored to bring God's Word to bear on the practical life of the church. It indicates that Paul himself was willing to listen to other officers when it came to practical matters, deciding what was best for the churches that were committed not simply to his, but to their mutual care. And plainly, he was willing to defer in such matters when the others did not see it his way.

So the apostle would have viewed us were he to have been delegated to our assembly, and so he would have labored as well. Not a man without his own strong opinions and perspective. But also not one who obstinately refused to hear what others had to say.

Brethren, let us take heart and deliberate as men. Let us labor in mutual esteem for each other, to be sure, but above all with the well-being of Christ's precious church foremost in mind.

That, after all, is what it means to labor in love, as love is apostolically defined—not for myself and my own reputation, but with those others bought by The Blood in mind.

... to be concluded— just like the 2009 Synod.

# marriage.

>> Bro Ishu

“Both husband and wife are to serve each other for the purer and better life that is to come, the heavenly life. Both parties in marriage must seek to influence each other, to improve each other, to be a sanctifying influence on each other. Together the Christian husband and wife, by the grace of God, must prepare each other for a better life to come. In heaven we will experience the blessed reality of the marriage of Christ and His church. Our earthly marriages can never be more than a very imperfect reflection of that blessed reality.” – Excerpt taken from the Standard Bearer (April 15th Issue)

What does the term “marriage” mean to you? Before you read on, do spend some moments contemplating on this word, and try to think about it based upon your own personal understanding of this interesting subject matter.

Yes, you are right. Marriage is an institution ordained by God. Marriage is a covenant between two persons in which an intimate and lifelong bond is created. God has commanded this from the very beginning that a man and a woman are to come together and become one flesh. Not only that, God also commanded that they remain as one for as long as they lived on this earth. Only death is able to break this bond and separate one from the other.

In God’s sovereign plan, marriage was a solemn gift from God to man. It is clearly stated in the bible that man was created to dwell on this earth not by himself, but to have someone to give him company. In Genesis 2:18, we read, “And the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

Besides all the other wonderful creatures which God created, He created man. But just man was not enough. God then created the woman. In Genesis 2:22 we read, “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” God created woman and gave her a place in the man’s life, which saw the first beginning of a marriage being constituted. Therein lies the answer for us to behold. How blessed in God’s sight is a marriage covenant.

Marriage is a lifelong commitment, and couples ought to know this important truth when they are dating one another. Most of us probably know about the exchanges which take place between a man and a woman during a wedding ceremony. It goes like this;

I, \_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_, to be my (husband/wife). I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honor you all the days of my life. I, \_\_\_\_, take you, \_\_\_\_, for my lawful (husband/wife), to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.

The man is called to play the part of a God-fearing husband. He is called to lead his family as the bread-winner of the family and provide for them daily.

Ephesians 5:23 reveals more to us. The verse reads, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body.” In this verse, a more wonderful picture of the relationship between a husband and a wife is depicted to us, as the covenant between Christ and His Church is revealed to us. It is indeed a wonderful picture.

The woman has the calling to know her place in the relationship as well. We read in Ephesians 5:22, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” She is called to be involved as a homemaker, and with the Lord’s blessings, bear children and raise them in the fear of



the Lord. A wife is also called to learn to live peaceably with her husband all the days of her life.

Marriage therefore should reveal to us a very beautiful picture. When two persons, very different in character, temperament, nature, and emotions come together, and are able to remain united in Christ, this unity is beyond comparison. Furthermore, no matter what their differences may be, if the husband and wife are also able to fully understand their respective roles in the marriage, that marriage covenant will be mightily blessed by the Lord

But, marriages have become a matter of much concern these days. Marriages are being very severely tested and threatened. One only has to read the media reports to know how bad the situation is. Most relationships are strained as a result of the man or woman being tempted, falling into an adulterous relation or other forms of evils. A marriage relationship can become strained due to the following reasons:

Adulterous behavior, Family strains, Emotional/physical abuse, Mid-life crisis, Workaholism, Addictions (alcoholism, gambling, etc.) Business problems, Other (communication problems, growing apart) Decision linked to a personal choice, Problems of a sexual nature, loss in income.

Marriages will no doubt continue to face the constant assault from the devil, who preys amongst God's people, and causes them to be lured away from their spouses. As fallen creatures, we are all prone to be tempted and to sin against God. Being

led by fleshly lusts, the natural man may have the tendency to become involved intimately with someone outside the marriage. God's word clearly teaches us that it is good for a man to marry and receive the love and satisfaction of his wife. 1 Cor 7:2 reminds us, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."

Every single man or woman in our midst should prayerfully consider settling down with a Christian partner if God has given them the opportunity. It has been said that no two persons of the opposite sex will be able to live together merely as friends for a long period of time. If they do, the relationship may soon lead to a more intimate one. And before this happens, it would be good for the couple to consider getting married, lest they sin against God by any of their actions which they may regret later in life. Making a sincere commitment with someone when you have found the right partner would be pleasing in the sight of God.

Finally, to remain faithful in a marriage requires perseverance. By looking daily to God and seeking His will, both the husband and wife can pray for continuity and longevity in their relationship. Another area of importance would be that the husband and wife ought to learn to trust one another. Without the necessary trust, the marriage will not develop in the long run, and peace will not prevail.

May we continue to pray fervently for all the marriages in our church. May

the good Lord grant to every husband and wife the much required grace, strength, and wisdom to do that which is pleasing in His sight, and to learn to live in peace and harmony with their spouses, "till death do us part". May we be able to look back after decades of our marriages and sing songs of praise to God with these words, "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1)

# Book Review

# Leaving Father & Mother

>> Cheryl Lim

Author: Cornelius Hanko

Reformed Free Publishing  
Association

Paperback, 64pp

This book is an exposition on the biblical teachings of courtship and marriage and though written more than 30 years ago, is perhaps even more relevant in this day and age. In this modern era, the church is being exposed to the increasingly sinful and less conservative views on, methods of and approaches to dating and marriage. Couples date for the fun and thrill of it, without any intention of marriage. New partners are found once there is no more excitement in the old. Even marriage and its vows are taken lightly, with divorce viewed as a “backdoor” escape from marriage.

In his book, the author expounds on the many aspects of dating and marriage, instituted by God in Genesis 2:24, Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. The author begins by explaining the reasons a man has to leave his parents and how it is not good for him to be alone. He then rightly points out that those who marry in the Lord are united by a spiritual bond over and above the physical and psychological bonds. Indeed, children of God will only love those that love the Lord.

This book is also immensely practical, teaching youths the “Do’s & Don’ts” of dating, including the interesting question of who should make the approach. The author further introduces 4 rules for courtship, emphasizing the need to get to know and respect each other, and warning against “hastily plunging into marriage” (p14). Using biblical principles, the author distinguishes the godly couple’s engagement and wedding from the worldly one. As with Christ and His bride, earthly engagement has binding power and should not be broken unless “we would sin against our God by carrying it out” (p28). The author touches on life during the engagement period; clearing of differences, compatibility, fears and assurances, devotions, children and sexual restraint. He also raises and supports a notion that is rather unfamiliar to us Singaporeans: that weddings be held on the Sabbath. A chapter has also been set aside to discuss the case of singles who do not marry.

In the concluding two chapters, the author explains the need for the marriage license, the marriage vow along with its implications and what it means to be “one flesh”. God is our witness when we make the marriage vows and truly man has no right to put asunder what God has joined together. Being “one flesh” is a “complete union of body, soul, and spirit” (p47) and this relationship is a picture of Christ and His Church. We can certainly be thankful to God who through Christ has restored the spiritual bond among believers that was damaged in paradise.

This short book is an easy read and strongly grounded upon Scripture’s teachings. I highly recommend the youths of the church to read it, especially those who have come of age.



# Prayer & Thanksgiving

## THANKSGIVING

1. Thank God for the successful conclusion of the Church Camp, CK Retreat and CKS Retreat, and His provision of safety, good weather, sweet fellowship, and most importantly, spiritual refreshment. Thank God for the work of the organizing committees of the various camps.
2. Thank God for Rev. Klein and his messages during the Church Camp, Sunday services and Family Seminar; for Pastor Lau's message at the CK Retreat; for Pastor Goh's messages at the CKS Retreat.
3. Thank God for providing us more opportunities to study His Word during the Family Seminar, Mission Seminar and CKS Evangelistic Event.
4. Thank God for his providence in sending more visitors to our church and generating greater interest in the Reformed faith.
5. Thank God for the nomination of two deacons and the willingness of these men to stand for office.
6. Thank God for the conclusion of the Annual Congregational Meeting and a fruitful discussion regarding church matters; and the election of two deacons.
7. Thank God for the testimonies given by the various campers during the church camp.

## SUPPLICATION

1. Pray for the leaders of the church that they will be equipped with godly wisdom to direct the church in the way of truth.
2. Pray for Deacon Chan and Bro. Daniel Ong as they prepare to take up a new term of office as Deacon.
3. Pray for Pastor Goh as he ministers both in Singapore and in Penang. Pray that God will give him the grace, wisdom and strength as he labors in both congregations.
4. Pray that God will continue to preserve and heal Pastor Lau so that he may continue to do God's work.
5. Pray for a church member who is under the second step of church discipline.
6. Pray for those who are or will be studying overseas - Gaius, Isaac Chan, Aaron, Huishi, Matthias Wee, Daniel Chew - that they will continue to stay close to God in even while a foreign land and that they will be able to worship in a good Reformed church.
7. Pray for greater support for the upcoming MPG visitations to various homes.
8. Pray for wisdom for the CI teachers as they guide the youth to grow deeper in their knowledge of God.
9. Pray for the older youths that they will consider and prepare to make their confession of faith after the conclusion of Pastor Goh's pre-confession class soon.
10. Pray for God's guidance for the CK/CKS Camp 2010 Committee to organize the annual year-end camp which will be spiritually beneficial to the youths; and for Prof. Hanko as he prepares to speak for the camp.
11. Pray for the Mission Committee as they organize upcoming Gospel Meetings. Pray that members will take this opportunity to spread the gospel to others in an appropriate manner.
12. Pray for the various Bible study groups, CK BS, CKS BS and the RRBC that they may continue to be a means of helping us to grow in the knowledge of God's Word and of the Reformed doctrines.



Retreat Participants

CK Retreat 2010

Retreat Committee

Night cycling

Amazing gRace

CERC CAMP 2010

Camp Speaker:  
Rev. Kleyn

Campfire Night

Annual Games

**Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church**

We are a Reformed Church that holds to the doctrines of the Reformation as they are expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort.

Place of Worship  
11, Jalan Mesin #04-00  
Standard Industrial Building  
Singapore 368813

Time of Worship  
Morning Service: 9:30am to 11:00am  
Afternoon Service: 2:00pm to 3:00pm

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