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**A FAMILY
SABBATH**

**VALUING THE GATHERING
OF THE CHURCH**

**LEVIATHAN
NONE LIKE HIM ON EARTH**

**A SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO
REV. WESLEY GRAHAM**



UNITY IN DIFFERENCE

Dr. Stephen Pollock

It was inevitable that this issue of *Current* would be dominated by Covid-19. Such has been the impact that most of us have had to view life through a virus-tainted lens. I have no delusions of grandeur regarding the import of this publication, but if the Lord tarries and there is some future pandemic, I do wonder if people will look to this issue to help determine how the Free Presbyterian Church responded to coronavirus in 2020. If so, they will find Mrs. Brown's summary helpful as well as Rev. Boyle's insights from Mexico. I trust future readers will also sense that our hearts were beating for the glory of God in the midst of all the uncertainty.

Our writers have fought the fight of faith and have expressed the godly responses of submission and fortitude to the challenges we faced. Yet a fair account of the recent history must include the multiplicity of opinions that swirled around in our churches. We are confronted with the place of modern medicine in the living out of ancient faith. We are also wrestling with the interaction of church and state. Then there is the age-old battle of working out what constituted our responsibility and what was tantamount to unbelief. Listening to many, I still keep hearing the fatigue that people have felt as they have tried to make decisions in church, home, and family.

Given such an experience, it has been a good time to consider a reality that recurs in church life—true believers don't always agree! Through the virus-lens, people united in Christ see things differently. How are we to enjoy genuine, Spirit-produced unity? Not by requiring uniformity of thought in

areas of conscientious difference. Paul acknowledged that two parties might differ, and both act as unto the Lord (Romans 14:6). Nor is unity produced by denying truth. There are times when we must separate for the sake of the honor of Christ. The church ought to stand firm for religious freedom and pray for civil leaders to act with integrity. Those who follow Christ will love their neighbor with compassion while fearing God not man. I am persuaded that the vast majority of our people are in agreement as to these principles and yet they have differed as to certain particular applications. For the sake of historical accuracy, we note that the decision to suspend public worship was not without controversy. Even now we are thinking over the controversies about certain measures that have been recommended or even mandated.

In such a climate, may the Free Presbyterian Church be marked by unity and not the polarization that characterizes the world. Paul exhorts the believers to unity in Philippians 2. That unity is grounded upon a shared experience of grace (v1). Unity thrives in the atmosphere of humility (vs3-4) and humility epitomizes the mind of Christ (v5).

Coronavirus may have blurred our vision on current issues, making it less than 20-20, but it must not blur our vision of Christ. Keeping a clear sight of our Christ, who humbled Himself in sacrifice for others and obedience to God, will be the ultimate means of preserving Christian unity. Christ selflessly humbled Himself for me, but also for the brother with whom I differ. Therefore, as Christ put my brother

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

(Philippians 2:2-4)

before Himself, so I must be willing to sacrificially love as Christ loved. It is a testimony of grace that the church loves and worships as one body when the world around us tears and devours one another.

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16). ❧

From the whole of Christ's humiliation in his life, learn you to pass through all the troubles of your life with a contented, composed spirit, as Christ your forerunner did. He was persecuted, and bare it meekly; poor, and never murmured; tempted, and never yielded to the temptation; reviled, and reviled not again. When you therefore pass through any of these trials, look to Jesus, and consider him. See how he that passed through those things before you, managed himself in like circumstances; yes, not only beat the way by his pattern, and example for you, but has in every one of those conditions left a blessing behind him, for them that follow his steps. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

John Flavel,
A Fountain of Life, Sermon 19



LEVIATHAN

NONE LIKE HIM ON EARTH

While not the most frequently cited animal in Scripture, the one with the longest and most complete description is the leviathan. All of Job chapter 41 is devoted to it. Why does this mysterious animal deserve such biblical attention? One must look at the story of Job to understand the leviathan's significance.

God describes Job as “a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil.” But his wealth, family, and health have been stripped from him. In pain he sits in ashes and desires to ask God why he is suffering. God does not directly answer. Instead, He gives a lengthy lecture, citing many object lessons from nature. Ultimately, He arrives at the large, strong behemoth and then climaxes with the mighty, fearsome leviathan. It appears that leviathan was chosen to represent the ultimate mystery of God's power in creation.

God describes the leviathan as having rows of sharp teeth and covered with strong, tight scales. It lives in water and when riled, he “maketh the deep to boil like a pot ... When he raiseth up himself, the mighty are afraid ...

He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood ... The arrow cannot make him flee ... Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.”

Job is asked if he can “draw out leviathan with a hook?” Can he butcher a leviathan for meat? Can he domesticate a leviathan for work or have it as a pet for his children? The answer is no. But God has claimed, “Whatsoever is under the whole earth is mine.” The leviathan is a ferocious beast, but God is its maker and master.

Other than the description in Job, leviathans are mentioned three times in Scripture (Psalm 74:14, 104:26; Isaiah 27:1) and are always described as aquatic. Translators chose not to pick an animal which approximated the description, but to transliterate the Hebrew word used in these passages. Commentators have suggested an alligator or crocodile as the leviathan.

Much of God's description of the leviathan may fit a crocodilian mold, but Job 41:19-21 presents an *uncrocodilian*

characteristic. “Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.”

LIBERALS AND FIRE-BREATHING

Most people deem fire-breathing animals a fantasy. “It would need a pilot light but the flame would cook the animal. If it went out, how does it get rekindled? What fuel is it burning? Since fire-breathing defies logic and the laws of nature, fire-breathing dragons are myths. Leviathans are alligator-like animals, and we must somehow allegorize the sparks and flames.” With that mindset, liberals have a field day with leviathans.

For some liberals the whole book of Job is a fairy tale—made more exciting by added monsters of which the leviathan is the icing on the cake. For them the God of Truth becomes a God of “frequent truths” with an occasional exaggeration for emphasis. In the past some have questioned whether the book of Job,

containing such “obvious untruths,” should even be in the Bible. But there are lessons about who God is and His relationship with Satan and humans that are learned most clearly in Job. Without a biblical Job, our understanding of God and His ways would be significantly lessened.

Other liberals claim that since Job was not overly impressed with the previously cited examples, God decided to stretch the truth to win Job’s admiration. In other words, God told made-up stories in order to convince Job of His power. To them God is not omnipotent, and He can lie when necessary. No!

Others seek to explain away the fire-breathing bit. Job is a poetical book. Perhaps God was using some elaborate literary device to describe the “mist” of a warm breath into cold air, like a whale breathing out its blowhole. Or perhaps God was describing “acidic vomit” the animal can wrretch up when it is threatened and thus “burn” its attacker. There are animals that spit venom.

A “like” or “as” in a brief fire reference might make it possible to write it off as a poetic device. But it is a several-verse-description directly using “sparks of fire”, “kindleth coals,” and “flame ... out of his mouth.” Is it reasonable to dismiss all that? Leviathan is also the climax of the whole line of reasoning. If this is a minor or common characteristic that is being over-stated for emphasis, the argument is weakened. Job must be familiar with leviathans as God describes them or God’s arguments are faulty.

FIRE-BREATHING POSSIBILITIES

The burning bush, crossing the Red Sea, feeding the five thousand were miraculous events—where God set aside what we would call the laws of nature and did something beyond a natural happening to suit His purpose. Some claim that God miraculously made a fire-breathing leviathan (like He prepared the great fish to swallow Jonah) just for the occasion of Job’s lesson. God does not claim a miraculous leviathan. The examples in God’s object lesson are all normal parts of the creation.

It appears that Job is being asked to consider the “regular workings” of God’s creation, which actually makes His argument stronger.

Recently the bombardier beetle has been cited to defend the leviathan’s fire-breathing. The beetle makes two different, harmless chemicals in glands in its abdomen. When the chemicals meet in the presence of air they become a hot, irritating gas which explodes from the bug’s posterior. The beetle effectively uses this chemical reaction to ward off attackers. Some dinosaurs have large chambers in their skulls. In the past, scientists speculated these sinuses served as resonating chambers, increasing the vocal abilities of the animal. But perhaps they contained glands producing unknown chemicals. You can see where this is going. From a chemical “pop” to fire that kindles coals is a pretty big step. Would it be too big for God?

Consider the “regular workings” of God’s creation

In the previous article we dealt with the possibility of Job living during the antediluvian period and the behemoth being a sauropod dinosaur. We also dealt with Job living in the postdiluvian patriarchal period and still being familiar with sauropod-behemoths. (They were on the Ark and became extinct sometime following Job’s experience with them.) These arguments equally apply to a leviathan being what we would call a dinosaur, although as some form of aquatic animal, it might not have needed a place on the Ark.

LEARNING JOB’S LESSON

God repeatedly recognized that Job had done all in his power to live a God-pleasing life. Job wanted to ask God the reason for his suffering and probably expected a brief answer.

Instead God responded with a lengthy description of the wonders of creation and other of His works. Then Job was asked what he had done that compared to what God had done.

This teaches Job, and us, about God. His ways are beyond our ways; His understanding is beyond our comprehension. We often do not or cannot understand what He is doing, but what He is doing is good and right, no matter what we may think about it. To the God who spoke an entire universe into existence, a fire-breathing dragon is no big deal. Such an animal may not be understandable to Job and may not make sense to us. So?

After God described the leviathan, Job declared, “I know that thou canst do every thing ... [and I have] uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.” In other words, following the ordeal Job had a better understanding of the incomprehensibility of God. He got what God had been teaching. God then puts Job’s “friends” in their place, and in a few verses, ends the book.

Liberals may seek to limit God, bringing Him down to the explainable or being capable of exaggerating His attributes. Bible-believing Christians must accept an all-powerful, all-knowing, just, and righteous God.

Both behemoths and leviathans need to be real animals; Job needs to be familiar with them; and they must live up to their descriptions to be appropriate culminations of God’s lesson for Job. Anything less would be ungod-like. To liberals I say, “Get over it!” We do not have to understand how God did it, and He does not have to reveal how it was done for it to be true. After all, He *is* God. And that *is* the point. ❏



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Valuing the Gathering of the Church

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Let's be honest. In the past we've all taken church gatherings for granted. We would go away on vacation for a couple of weeks, safe in the knowledge that when we returned the church would still be there. We might have missed church when we were ill, but knew that the doors would always be opened when we recovered. In March 2020 all of our churches took the decision to suspend public assembly. By the time this goes to print, churches will have reconvened gatherings in some form. In Malvern FPC there were eight Lord's Days when sermons were broadcast online, where people met to pray on Skype, but there was no corporate worship properly understood.

On the first of those Lord's Days, I preached on Hebrews 10:24-25. It was my hope then, as it is now, that the coronavirus shut-down would cause the Lord's people to have a renewed and elevated esteem for the assembling of the saints. It was my burden that we would never again take public worship for granted.

Public worship is first and foremost about the Lord. The Lord commands and commends public, corporate, united worship. The word "congregation" occurs over 360 times in the Old Testament—the vast majority referring to the gathering of the Lord's people. The wilderness tabernacle is called the *tabernacle of the congregation* (Exodus 27:21). The command comes, "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the

congregation of saints" (Psalms 149:1). Moving into the New Testament, the lengthiest treatment of corporate church life is found in 1 Corinthians 11-14. The passage deals with head covering, communion, and the public exercise of various gifts. In seven verses the church is said to "come together." It is apparent that people left their own homes and gathered together as the Lord's people for public worship. "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place" (1 Corinthians 14:23; compare 1 Corinthians 11:34, 14:35).

Without getting involved in a discussion about the rightness or wrongness of suspending worship due to coronavirus, we acknowledge that there are personal reasons when we might legitimately miss worship. There may also be regional and national events or extreme weather conditions that could cause a church session to suspend the gatherings. We lament such seasons. We feel the obligation to enjoy the privilege of the worship of our God and Savior. Such times of absence ought to work within our hearts the longing to be together. This longing must not only be a longing to worship but, as we'll see in Hebrews 10:24-25, it should be a longing to minister as part of the family of God's people.

The writer of Hebrews brings an exhortation to his readers not to forsake their assembling together. This must refer to the church body gathering together. "Assembling" is translated "gathering together" in 2 Thessalonians

2:1. Some were forsaking the assembly. In the context of Hebrews, it is likely that the writer's sights are set on those who were apostatizing from Christ. The implication is that the apostate leaves off church attendance as he turns away from Christ. Another implication is that regular church gathering is a means of grace, ordained of God, as a preventative to apostasy.

In order for church assembly to function as ordained of God, the Lord's people must be conscious of their responsibility. In order for the assembly to be beneficial we need to "consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." We "consider one another" when we think carefully about each other. (The word "consider" is used in Luke 12:24, 27 with the idea of careful thought). The church family is made up of individuals and we all must take steps to think about each other. We ought to have a concern for each other's spiritual progress. The particular context here is the peril of apostasy. The church, as it gathers, is used by God as a means of preventing the saints from falling away. We've already observed that as apostates fall away from Christ, they also forsake the assembling of the saints. But for the church to function as a God-ordained preventative to apostasy there must be this determination to think, with concern, about each other's souls.

When we gather, this mutual concern will be manifest in our provoking (v24) and exhorting (v25) one another. Exhortation is spiritual encouragement.

It happens when a believer draws alongside another and spurs him on in his Christian work. Provocation carries with it the idea of contact, even conflict. It's translated "contention" in Acts 15:39. I think the thought is that the Lord's people will challenge one another in their pilgrimage. These two activities require the Lord's people to communicate and interact regarding their spiritual condition. Much can be achieved remotely through verbal and written communication, but the assembly of the saints is the place where, ordinarily, week by week, we provoke one another and exhort one another. The believer, as a sheep, has a tendency to weariness and to wandering and the Lord has placed us in flocks for our eternal good.

On several occasions we read of Paul's desire to see the churches (e.g. Romans 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:6). Paul understood the benefit of his epistles but knew the greater benefit of his presence. He would tell Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). God calls men to labor in the Word. This must include exhortation. After all, the Scripture is "given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). Exhortations don't just come from the pulpit; they come from pew to pew. The Lord has placed people in my life who were willing to come alongside and encourage me to keep going and not give up.

These exhortations also occur as the church sings together. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). We need to remember that when we sing to the Lord, we are also singing to one another! It's another reminder to sing truth from the heart.

Nor do exhortations only occur by word. Our presence can be an encouragement to others around us.

I remember a lady in a church who, by any rule, should have remained at home every Lord's Day due to ill health. Instead, she determined to spend her Lord's Days in the Lord's house. Although she said little, her living testimony exhorted others to persevere in their loyalty to Christ.

Hebrews 10:24-25 gives us one explicit aim of church fellowship. When the church gathers, out of concern for each other, we should all seek to provoke each other to love and good works. These are the God-appointed goals of church fellowship. Our churches are functioning properly when there is mutual increase in the grace of love and the practice of good works. It is reasonable to ask ourselves, "How are we doing in the functioning of our fellowship?" The answer can only come through an honest assessment of the presence of good works out of love for God and man.

Love for God is obedience to the first commandment and love for man is the accompaniment to our love for God. "We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:19-21). Such love for God and man is the product of the work of the Holy Spirit, but in Hebrews 10 we see that we are to provoke that in our fellow believers. The Lord graciously uses human instruments as a means to promoting Christian growth. It's a blessing to see the Lord's people in conversation on the Christian Sabbath. It is the pastor's prayer that those conversations have, at least in part, the aim of stimulating love for God and man.

Such love is never merely expressed in words but also in deeds (1 John 3:18). Hence, good works are provoked as God's people are provoked to love. The widow "indeed" of 1 Timothy 5:10 is, "well reported of for good works." Those works are seen in the home, "if she have brought up

children"; in society, "if she have lodged strangers"; and in the church, "if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted." A biblical understanding of church fellowship will include the desired outcome of a loving people, hard at work for the good of men at home, in the church, and in the wider community.

Just in case we think that functioning church fellowship is of secondary importance, our text brings us to the Lord's return. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together... and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). The Lord is coming back. This is no time for apostasy. This is time to follow Christ fully. This is the time to persevere and to exhort others to persevere in love and good works. Our presence in the assembly of the saints matters in the light of judgment and eternity.

It is a godly response to feel deep sorrow at the absence of public assembly. There is protection and blessing in the church assembling. Therefore, there is spiritual danger when we are not assembling together. May an awareness of this refresh our appreciation for our church family. But may it also be a time to redefine why we "do church." First and foremost, it's about the glory of God. But it's also for the good of God's people. Let's make sure that we don't commit to one and neglect the other. Biblical Christianity is not a social enterprise. But our love for God is not simply an individual experience. Apostates abandon the church family. Saints, on the other hand, serve out of a persevering love for God. ☒



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A Family Sabbath



As the Holy Spirit continues His sanctifying work, one evidence will be to eliminate wrong thinking in the Christian's life by conforming him to Jesus Christ, the perfect reflection of the law of God.

An example of wrong thinking is a false notion that the Christian Sabbath is a restriction of our liberties. This is far from the case. When the children of Israel escaped slavery, rather than being restrictive, the Sabbath was a gift to them. And it is still a gift—a gift to you and your family. I want to help you make the most of it.

SCHEDULE THE DAY

Have you ever felt like you lost a day? That you accomplished nothing? This is why we use schedules. We didn't invent them, God did. He made time—day and night, a seven-day week, and the seasons—setting a pattern for us.

I'll not argue the case for morning and evening public worship here, but I believe that is an ideal start, if possible, as you think about structuring the Lord's Day for you and your family. In addition, it can be wise to schedule a nap in the day, which can help you and your children revitalize your mind so

that you can give your best to and benefit from evening worship.

USE THE DAY

The point of a schedule is to help make the most use of our time. Benjamin Franklin said, "To fail to plan is to plan to fail." Plan your Lord's Day. Beyond the time we spend with the Lord's people in our public assemblies, there are other good uses of the day including reading Scripture and good books, praying, napping, and fellowshiping.

For children, provide age-appropriate Christian reading material. It may be material you can read with them, or provide books and read them together. As lunch is being prepared, perhaps you could have a discussion about the morning message with your children, and tell them what specifically blessed you and why. Think of ways to engage their young minds with eternal truths.

If you have more free time, find a series or subject on Sermonaudio that may be of benefit to your soul. And at certain times, especially in the morning, set the atmosphere for the day by playing Christian music. Try Abiding Radio (the app or website).

ENJOY THE DAY

The Lord's Day is a reminder that you are no longer a slave, and through Christ and His finished work you will one day enter the eternal Sabbath, where all the things that make us need a Sabbath in the first place will be banished forever. This is a truth to be enjoyed, not endured, and it's important to communicate this to your children. When they are young, give them something to look forward to each Lord's Day. It doesn't have to be complicated. One family I know used to allow their children to choose a bar of chocolate each week, which they received on the Sabbath.

Finally, try to invite people into your home with some regularity and enjoy a portion of the day together.

May these suggestions stir your thoughts and help you and your family to make the most of the gift of the Lord's Day. ❏



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Report on Geneva Reformed Seminary

Interview with Rev. Geoff Banister

How did you first get involved in the Seminary Committee?

My involvement with the Seminary Committee goes back a long way. When I was ordained as the minister of the Indianapolis church in August 2001 (just a couple of weeks before 9/11) I began attending presbytery meetings again following a 7-year period in which I served in the church as a layman. It doesn't take long for men in the presbytery to notice anyone who isn't serving on a committee. Since the presbytery was interested in men who weren't teaching in the seminary to have oversight of the seminary, I became a natural pick to serve on the committee.

We've all been praying for Dr. Allison, Seminary President and are very thankful for answered prayers. How did his illness impact the running of the seminary?

There have been a number of things through the years that have had a strong impact on the seminary, but none so profound as Dr. Allison's illness. Dr. Allison had been handling the lion's share of the teaching, as well as all of the administrative and planning functions of the seminary. The committee had to shift gears and go from oversight duties to administrative duties.

What measures were taken to work through these challenges?

Plans were mapped out and presented to the presbytery which took stock of what we had and what we needed. This was done not knowing how or to what extent Dr. Allison would be able to be involved. We weren't even sure in those days as to whether or not Dr. Allison would still be with us or would be called home to glory. We were fortunate to have on hand recorded lectures that were being used by online students, so those lectures became our *bread and butter*, so to speak. Since then we've been transitioning into more of a digital classroom and we've been able to get more of our ministers involved with the use of tools such as Zoom.

How many students are presently enrolled in courses?

Currently, there are two students in residence in Greenville and two that join the classes remotely. We also have two men under care from Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Rev. Jason Boyle, our minister in Mexico City, oversees their training and has been very busy having materials translated into Spanish as well as sub-captioning videotaped lectures into Spanish. In addition to these men, there are at least two others pursuing the Minister of Religious Education degree online. Dr. Allison's health has improved sufficiently to facilitate those courses.

The Lord's work is never without its difficulties, but no one saw coronavirus coming! How has the seminary dealt with this crisis?

Compared to the crisis of Dr. Allison's health, the coronavirus seems almost insignificant in comparison. I'm speaking now in terms of Geneva Reformed Seminary (GRS) operations, not in terms of the seriousness of the pandemic. The impact has been felt much more keenly by our churches than it has been felt by GRS. I think it would be fair to say that the virus has had no significant impact on GRS since we were ahead of the game with the use of digital technology.

How should we pray for the seminary going forward?

First and foremost, please continue to pray for Dr. Allison. He has improved significantly but has not recovered fully. When reports started reaching us about his miraculous comeback, we were probably too optimistic that things could simply resume the way they were before his brain cancer. He is able to be involved with GRS to a limited degree, compared to what he used to do. Next, please pray for the students. They've been caught in the middle of all the adjustments that have been made and in addition to everything, they need to prepare for the ministry. They also need strong doses of patience as we continue to adjust and improve the operations of GRS. ❧

GENESIS

GOD'S BOOK OF BEGINNINGS STUDY NOTES

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 6:

The rapid increase of the world's population before the flood unleashed an appalling and widespread explosion of human depravity upon society. Intermarriage between the lines of Seth and Cain produced offspring that were renowned for violence and rebellion to God. God saw men as slaves to sin displaying a wicked spirit of lawlessness. His righteous nature being grieved, He determined to judge the world. To keep a godly seed alive on the earth, God chose Noah and his family as a link between the first Adam and the Messiah. Noah believed God's warnings of judgment upon the earth and so obeyed God to build the ark to preserve life from the world-wide flood.

Noah's testimony was clean-cut. He was a faithful and obedient servant of the Lord, who obeyed God through faith (Genesis 6:22; Hebrews 11:7).

Key verse:

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (v 8).

This super-abounding concept of God's undeserving mercy is found here in God's dealings with Noah. One man walked with God causing him to stand out from the world of rebellious men. Noah's name means peace. He was God's instrument to bring peace to a lawless world. He and his family saw the new world and they saw God's promised rainbow in the sky, that signified His covenant of peace.

OBSERVATIONS: LESSONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

1. LIKE A DISEASE, THE SPREAD OF EVIL IN THE WORLD WAS DRIVEN BY A MASSIVE INCREASE IN POPULATION.

The first millennium after Creation was almost free from human mortality. Men continued to have children throughout their long lives. See the increase in Methuselah's family (Genesis 5:26). The first note of alarm that rang out in this Genesis record declared, "When men began to multiply" (Genesis 6:1).

Intermarriage between the line of Seth ("the sons of God") and the line of Cain ("the daughters of men") brought sudden and irreparable apostasy, a dramatic departure from God. Men became beastly in their ways. "Mighty men" took over. Wicked men began to hold offices of power and leadership and morality spiraled downward. These "giants," literally bullies, gave no place to righteous Noah. There is no place for the notion that procreation took place between angelic beings and humans to produce these "giants." Nephilim (see margin), means bullies, not angels. The same term is used for the Anakim, who were a people of large stature (Numbers 13:33).

2. UNDER THE MICROSCOPE OF SCRIPTURE, MAN'S NATURE IS FOUND TO BE TOTALLY DEPRAVED (GENESIS 6:5).

The words "only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5) show that man is corrupted by sin and is incorrigible in his rebellion to God's law. He is independently driven by his own carnal lusts, for his every faculty is affected by the fall. Due to this inner depravity, men need no enticement

to rebel against God for the unregenerate man is a natural, thoroughbred sinner. Left to himself, he will never turn to God. He craves for freedom to follow his own natural desires and will always choose evil, unless God is pleased to change his heart.

3. THE REFERENCE TO GOD REPENTING IN GENESIS 6:6 IS HUMAN SPEAK!

In this language God's repentance is referred to after the manner of men. It is language adopted for men to understand that the lifestyles of men whom God had created good and upright to bring Him pleasure, deeply offended Him. God's nature had not changed, nor had His holy standard required of men. John Calvin explained God's repentance over man:

"This is not my workmanship; this is not that man who was formed in my image, and whom I had adorned with such excellent gifts: I do not deign now to acknowledge this degenerate and defiled creature as mine."

This offence to God brought a righteous response—a determination of judgment that affected the whole world including living things in the earth, over which man was given dominion. To this day, the whole creation groans under the future judgment that awaits this fallen world (Romans 8:20-23). All of this should teach us to dread sin. The more we realize how sin offends God bringing terrible consequences upon the world, the more we will hate sin.

4. GOD DEALT WITH NOAH IN GRACE.

It is in the background of the judgment of the world that we begin to recognize the amazing nature of God's grace to Noah. Noah was of the line of Seth. He was a preacher of righteousness. He walked with God. All of these good qualities in Noah were the result of grace. Grace preceded his works, which is also true in New Testament saints (Ephesians 2:8-10). God dealt with Noah in undeserving mercy, and



in the blessing of this mercy he withstood the forces of evil in his generation. By God's grace stirring his heart he obeyed God through faith in His Word (Hebrews 11:6-7).

5. GOD REVEALED TO NOAH BOTH HIS PLAN OF JUDGMENT AND HIS PLAN OF SALVATION.

He warned Noah that He would cause a world-wide flood within 120 years (Genesis 6:3). The extent of the flood is clearly stated, "And every thing that is in the earth shall die" (Genesis 6:17). This was not a local flood! When God instructed Noah to build the ark (Genesis 6:14-22), He revealed to Noah the way of salvation for himself and his family, and for all who would heed God's call to be saved from the flood. God gave the dimensions of the ark and the materials to use. Likewise, salvation is not left to man's planning. God's way of saving sinners by the sacrifice of His Son on the cross is God's eternal plan of redemption by the blood of Christ. Gospel preachers are to both warn sinners of the wrath to come and to preach the cross of Christ to be saved, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

APPLICATION:

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO ME?

We must consider the world before the flood, the present world, and then the world that shall be when Christ shall renew the world in righteousness (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1,22-27). This present world is the world that has been judged. It bears all the marks of the world-wide deluge and its destructive forces. Fossils, layered rocks, ice ages, continuous volcanoes, and storms as well as lethal viruses are all reminders that this present world is groaning until the day of redemption.

God's judgment upon the old world is a warning to us of the reality that God's wrath will fall upon this present world for its rebellion against Him. God's wrath is real, and it is terrible. His righteous nature demands that He cannot tolerate sin. His longsuffering with sinners, granting time for repentance, must not be interpreted as indifference. From the Genesis account we learn that God sees our sin (Genesis 6:5); God responds to our sin in grief (Genesis 6:6); and God intervenes to judge our sin in wrath (Genesis 6:7).

It is in sovereign, covenant mercy (Genesis 6:18) that God works to save His people. God's mercy to Noah opened a new chapter in world history. From one man and his family, the world has been re-populated (Acts 17:26). Through Noah's line of descendants, God has provided a Savior. Our Lord Jesus is the Savior of sinners, though they are depraved. He calls sinners to repentance to enjoy the power of His redeeming blood, which is able to cleanse them from the penalty of sin and

to free them from the power of sin. Our great commission is to go into all the world and preach the gospel—God's good news to sinners.

THINGS TO DO IN LIGHT OF THIS STUDY:

Visit the Creation Museum in Kentucky, U.S.A. to see a life-size model of Noah's ark (Google: Ark Encounter).

Calculate the cubic volume within the ark. Dr. Henry Morris estimated 1.4 million cubic feet. (*The Genesis Record*, p 181).

Study the fossil record to discover the amazing evidence in so many parts of the world for a definite period of destruction and death.

Ask: Is evolutionary dating based on the geological record valid? What about the missing links?

Check out the Lord's reference to the genealogy of Noah (Luke 3:36). Note: Look for "Noe."

Read the gospel passages where Christ spoke of the days of Noah's flood. (Matthew 24:37-38; Luke 17:26-27). ■



Rev. Ian Goligher
is the pastor of Cloverdale
FPC, Vancouver, BC.



After a short illness, following his diagnosis of a brain tumor earlier this year, Rev. Wesley Graham passed into God's presence on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at his own home in Bangor, Northern Ireland. As a presbytery family in North America, we extend our sympathies to Rev. Graham's wife Carol, their children, and grandchildren. Rev. Ian Harris, Chairman of Mission Board of the Ulster Presbytery gives this tribute:

The Lord's people ought to reflect with thankfulness to God for all that Rev. Graham was enabled, by His grace, to see accomplished in the land of Nepal. It is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our eyes.

After seven years of faithful service in the Free Presbyterian Church in Bristol, Wesley started his full-time work under the Mission Board in 2010. Throughout his life, he displayed that pioneer spirit in many ways, which is essential in missionary work. He was a founder member of the congregation in Bangor and an evangelist, even before commencing studies at the Whitefield College of the Bible. He was a man of prayer. In his public intercession, he had power and unction from the Lord. Faithful to the end, Wesley attended and preached at the Ulster Presbytery's ministers' week of prayer in January of this year.

His first visit to Nepal was with Mr. George McConnell in November 2006. There, he was burdened for

the vast spiritual needs of that land and God placed a burden on his heart for the Nepalese people. Wesley helped to co-ordinate various conferences for the church leaders of the Nepal Mission to the Unreached in subsequent years. The first conference was held in 2006 with only 45 attending. Those numbers have grown to 300 people in 2019 with the limitation of space preventing more from attending.

The Precious Children's Home began in 2003, when Rev. Paul and Mandira Thapa adopted five children who had lost either one or both parents. When the men visited in 2006, there were eleven children living with the Thapa family, and they saw the need for larger premises. As a result, when they returned home, they raised funds to build a new home for the children. That home also became too small for the numbers and a second larger home was built in subsequent years. Wesley had the joy of officially opening the new home in 2018, which now accommodates thirty children. Over the years, Wesley was a true father-figure to those children in the home.

One of the purposes of his first visit in 2006 was to prepare for LTBS-sponsored radio broadcasts in the Nepalese language, which had only been broadcast in English. This was the beginning of a vast expansion of the radio work, which has been so blessed with the salvation of many souls and the commencement of local churches.

As the Nepalese work grew and more churches were formed, Wesley quickly saw

the need for a Bible College to train men for the ministry of the gospel. This was built in 2009 and opened in 2010. Wesley was meticulous in his planning for the college curriculum and classes. He was in his element, but when God raised up other men to teach the courses, Wesley was happy to hand that over to them. He never wanted to be in the spotlight, but was content just being in the work, seeing others coming on to take the work forward.

As the work developed and more men were trained, Wesley prepared the way for the formation and constitution of the first Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Nepal in November 2013.

Rev. Paul Thapa and the believers in the Nepal Free Presbyterian Church deserve special tribute. Their love and help to Wesley and Carol made the whole venture possible. In his own very personal tribute, Rev. Thapa said of Wesley: "Rev. Graham lived his life as he taught and preached. 'Preaching and living go together', he used to say. He lived a life of example, and he fought a very good fight of the Faith."

I believe that Wesley Graham packed a normal working man's full life into his last decade. In one short tribute it would be impossible to cover all the numerous and varied aspects of his ministry. Wesley's labors here are finished, but his works will follow him. ❏



Testimony

Rev. Thomas Lavery

Minister-Elect of Orlando FPC

I was born on May 24, 1969 in Ballymena, Northern Ireland. My family attended public worship in the Presbyterian church in the nearby village of Ahoghill. I must confess that I never remember a time when I did not know my need of a Savior, due to the fact that we had a faithful minister of the gospel and faithful Sunday school teachers.

At age 16 I left school, and a short time later, I got a job in Dale Farm Dairies in Ballymena, where I worked for 13 years. Like many my age, I began to live for the pleasures of the world and sin. I had many good friends who still remain to this day.

In August 1998, an evangelist came to do a gospel mission in Ballymena as a result of some believers in the town being burdened to pray for the district. A two-week mission was planned to be held in a little mission hall. That gospel mission lasted for nine weeks and it was marked by prayer. There were prayer meetings every morning at 6:30 a.m. as believers gathered to pray before going to work. There was further prayer before and after the meetings.

I did not attend the mission for the first two weeks, but on the third week I decided to go. I didn't hear anything I didn't already know, but I began to come under terrible conviction of sin. Never did I feel my sin and guilt so

much. Never did I feel the depth to which I was in trouble with God. I remember leaving the meeting really troubled at the prospect that death could come at any moment and I would be ushered out into God's eternity.

It didn't matter where I was, or what I was doing, there was this awful sense of conviction of sin in my soul.

I decided to return to the mission one more night the next week, and again the presence of God was there, again there was trouble in my soul. By the end of that week, I decided that I was going to go out and get drunk and forget all about what I'd heard because I thought, "I can't go on like this."

I did get drunk, but discovered in the pubs that much of the conversation was about the mission. Unknown to me, many people were beginning to attend on different nights. The whole atmosphere in the town seemed to be different. God was speaking through the preaching of His Word. I spent most of that weekend drinking, but I could not get my need of Christ out of my head. Alcohol does not remove the power of conviction of sin.

When I was in the bar for a drink the following Monday, I decided to return to the mission that night, which would have been my third night attending, and the fifth week of the mission. The preacher spoke on a message he entitled, "A Carnival near Hell." He spoke on God's judgment for sin and the only remedy was found alone in Jesus Christ. That night my soul was in turmoil. I

knew if I came to Christ, I would be saved; I knew if I didn't, I would lose my soul, and it would be my fault. I knew I must step out on the promise of God, and turn from sin and come to Christ.

It was September 28, 1998 and that was the night this sinner passed from death unto life. That night this sinner found redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins. The whole town was touched by the Lord's presence at that mission, and many souls came to faith in Christ as Redeemer. I thank my God for every remembrance of those days when the burden of my heart rolled away beneath the cleansing blood.

Ten years later, I began training for the Christian ministry at the Whitefield College of the Bible. I want to make it abundantly clear that I am unworthy of this calling. It is an unspeakable honor to be asked to say a word for Jesus Christ.

I do thank God for His mercy and grace in my life. I have a Father in heaven who loves me. I have a Savior who died for me and the Holy Ghost as my comforter and guide. I have the Word of God as my only rule of faith and practice.

I end this testimony by giving all the praise and honor and glory to the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. ❏



Mexico Mission and Coronavirus (May 2020)

The coronavirus has hit Mexico City hard, as would be expected of a city with a metropolitan area of over 20 million people. The hospitals are almost filled to capacity, and there is still much unease with regard to what the future holds. We have not been meeting in our church building since the end of March, and it looks like that will continue until June at the earliest.

Thankfully our church people have been kept safe. The sister of a lady in our church was diagnosed with Covid-19, and it is likely that the sister had it too, but they both seem to have recovered from the virus. Some friends and family of people in our church also have the virus, and some have passed away, but we thank the Lord that He has preserved our people. Please continue to pray for that protection, as we have a good number of elderly or chronically sick people in the church who are at high risk of the virus.

One of the biggest challenges we face is economic—about half of all Mexicans work in a job where they get paid day

to day, instead of having a fixed income. That has caused a real issue during the quarantine, because if these people don't go out to work, they have no money. Many have expressed that they are in an impossible situation: either they go out, work, and perhaps get exposed to the coronavirus and die, or they stay at home and die of hunger.

Our church has taken seriously that need for our people and is fully supporting around ten families during this crisis—people who are not working and have no income. Please pray that the Lord will continue to provide through the generous offerings of those in our church who are still working, and also from those outside our church. We are thankful for those who have thought of us during this time and have showed their love in such a practical way.

As in all our churches, we are longing to meet together again and enjoy the fellowship of the saints and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Please pray for spiritual strength for our people, and for unity

of heart when the Lord allows us to have services again. That is going to be a complicated process, considering the extreme precautions that the city has taken to avoid an even more massive outbreak.

Please also pray for our sister churches during this crisis. Wenceslao and Pepe, two pastors who have expressed interest in joining with us, do not have jobs, as is the case for many in their churches. Ramón, in the Dominican Republic, has not had any income for two months, and is in great need as well. Thankfully, Lalo and Jair continue to have work, for which we praise the Lord. All of these men, as well as our church here in Mexico City, would greatly covet your prayers as we navigate these difficult times. ☞



Rev. Jason Boyle
and his wife Danielle are
FPC Missionaries in Mexico
City, Mexico.



Companionship in Marriage

Brownlow North was a well-known evangelist in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. He served in Scotland, but also played a notable role in the Ulster revival of 1859. One fact about Mr. North that is less well known is that, as an unconverted twenty-something, during one winter he asked nineteen ladies to be his wife! They all said yes! It would appear that Mr. North was like many young people—he didn't know what he wanted in a spouse.

In rightly identifying a future husband or wife, we should have a clear view of marriage as ordained and governed by the Lord. In the last issue we noted a definition of marriage arising from Malachi 2:14, "Yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." When we accept that marriage is a covenant of companionship, we will have a better sense of what we are looking for in a spouse. The covenant aspect underlines the solemnity of the matter. The issue of companionship speaks to the sweetness of the matter.

Before coming to the features of companionship, I want to emphasize that companionship in marriage is a biblical concept. God uses marriage to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Those who know the Lord can testify to the truth that one of the blessings of saving grace is being reconciled to God. When a soul is saved, enmity with God is removed and communion and fellowship are restored. The believer is said to "walk with God." Christ is the friend that sticks closer than a brother. Hence, if marriage is to fulfil its God-

given goal of illustrating Christ and the church, this concept of companionship must not be ignored. Sadly, there are some who carry the symbols and appearance of Christianity who know nothing of the reality of this fellowship with God. As such they make a mockery of the appearance. Similarly, in marriage—some people wear the symbol of a ring when the substance is absent. Young people considering marriage must see companionship as a vital and biblical goal.

Companions **delight** in each other's company. As the Christian delights to hear the Lord and speak to the Lord, so married persons ought to delight in listening and talking. You should never consider marriage to someone whose company you don't enjoy. You might like to look at them, but it's very important you want to hear them and that they are glad to hear you!

Companions **share** with each other. The word "companion" arises from an old French word meaning "one who breaks bread with another." Companions will also be prepared to **sacrifice** self for the other's good. Companions **encourage** and **support** one another. "A friend loveth at all times" (Proverbs 17:17). This is the basis of the marriage vows: "In sickness or in health, for richer or for poorer." Companionship involves a loving support that doesn't fail, no matter the trial.

Companions **help** one another to fulfil their God-given tasks in life. In this area, the wife in particular is singled out. Genesis 2:20 refers to the wife as an "help meet." The wife is

seen by God as a necessary and suitable helper for her husband. Of course, this does not excuse the husband from helping his wife. He is to nourish and cherish her (Ephesians 5:29). He is to live with her according to knowledge, giving her honour, as the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7).

Christ is the greatest example of a companion. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "For even the Son of man came not to be [served], but to [serve], and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The Lord is the perfect manifestation of one who looked not "on his own things" but "also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4).

When we consider the joy of companionship it is obvious why we desire marriage; however, marriage is a terrible hardship when one party is marked by selfishness. A selfish spouse is a snare! Be warned young people! Beware being attracted to someone whose life revolves around themselves. Seek a spouse whom you delight to serve. Seek a spouse who delights to serve you. It's a good form of marital conflict when spouses are in competition of serving one another! ❏



Dr. Stephen Pollock is minister of Malvern FPC, Malvern, PA and editor of *Current*.



None of us will ever forget the year 2020 when the world shut down amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Worry about sickness, coping with sudden changes, and fear of the unknown have stressed both the world and our hearts. While we may not fix the world, living with anxious hearts is not how God intends His daughters to live. How have you survived in these days? I have friends who have coped by accomplishment overdrive, while others became paralyzed with worry. What is an anxious heart really? Isn't it a lack of submission to our good and sovereign God who orders everything for His own glory and the good of His people? Submission to God orders our thoughts and guides our actions in both normal and pandemic days. But submission is a rather unpopular word in the world today. Just mention "submission" and both men and women tense up! As a result, the topic of submission is abused, ignored, and only occasionally whispered. What God meant for good has been perverted, abused, and misunderstood.

In the book of Titus, we see the principles of submission as the apostle Paul instructs Titus to "set in order the things that were lacking" in the Cretian churches. Throughout the book, Paul outlines order for church life, home life, civil government, and relationships with others and with self. Being under God-given authority brings order to life and glory to God.

The Greek word for submission means "to arrange under" and was originally a

Greek military term used for arranging the troops under the direction of the commanding officer. The Old Testament phrase "to set the battle in array" gives the idea (2 Samuel 10). Paul instructed Titus to "set in order the things that are wanting" (Titus 1:5). The military use of submission, "arranging or ordering under," is expanded in the non-military use to mean "a voluntary attitude of cooperation and assuming responsibility; a yielding to the authority of another." Synonyms include subjection and obedience.

In the gospel, submission involves feelings of desire, honor, and love (Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:33; Titus 2:4). Not only does God give us the command, but He also gives us the most beautiful example of submission. The Lord Jesus Christ, the altogether lovely One, has beautifully modeled submission to God the Father. The Son submitted to do the Father's will. It was not beneath Him, rather He came with delight to do the Father's will. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Psalm 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7,9). He came zealously, setting His face as a flint for Jerusalem, and joyously, for the joy that was set before Him. As a youth, He was obedient to Mary and Joseph. In John 5:30, Jesus did not seek to do His own will, but "the will of the Father" who had sent Him. As Jesus neared the cross-work, He prayed in John 17, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have manifested thy name...I have given them the words

which thou gavest me." Agonizing in the Garden, Jesus submitted, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." In perfectly fulfilling the Father's will, the Lord Jesus Christ elevated submission to its rightful place of honor, beauty, dignity, and glory.

As the Lord Jesus Christ submitted Himself to do the Father's will, so may Christian women surrender to heart submission as unto the Lord. My dear sisters-in-Christ, "Let us meditate upon these things, giving ourselves wholly to them, that our profiting may appear to all" (1 Timothy 4:15). May the Lord help us echo Charles Wesley's words:

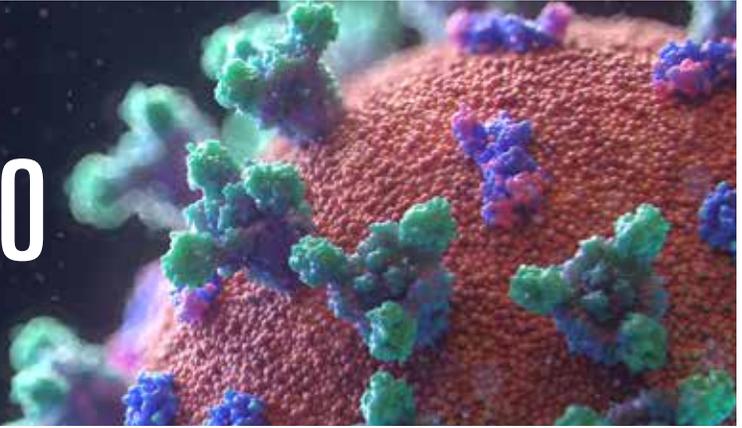
*O for a heart to praise my God
A heart resigned, submissive, meek
A humble, lowly, contrite heart
A heart in every thought renewed and
full of love divine
Perfect and right and pure and good
A copy, Lord, of Thine.*

Then living from a submitted, settled heart, Christian women can thrive, not just survive, during normal and pandemic days. ❧



Mrs. Barbara Mooney
wife of Rev. Myron Mooney,
Trinity FPC, AL.

The FPCNA and the Pandemic of 2020



For the Free Presbyterian Church of North America, 2020 began as years usually do—with prayer and plans. No one foresaw that less than three months into the new year, God would let a tiny virus affect the world in such a way that almost all those plans would be cancelled.

At the beginning of March the *FPCNA Prayer Bulletin* reported that Calgary FPC had just welcomed Rev. Paul Backhurst and his family and was looking forward to his installation on March 24. Rev. Ian Goligher was enjoying opportunities to give the gospel to hospital patients. Rev. Jason Boyle was traveling around Mexico meeting with men interested in forming a Free Presbyterian denomination in Latin America; he and Danielle were looking forward to deputation meetings in May in the U.S. (their first in ten years).

Faith FPC was planning for the Ministers' Week of Prayer and presbytery meeting in May and for VBS in June. Dr. Pollock was asking for prayer for the youth camp in July. Orlando was waiting to hear whether Rev. Thomas Laverty had accepted its call, and the Bowmans were preparing the mission team for its trip to Liberia in August. Only the Toronto report mentioned something about the virus; students in the Whitefield Christian Schools had ties to some of the first countries affected.

The May/June issue of the *Prayer Bulletin* told an entirely different story. Mr. Backhurst's installation had been put off indefinitely. Mr. Laverty had accepted the call of Orlando FPC, but he and the church were in limbo as they waited for travel restrictions to be lifted. Most of the ministers were preaching to cameras in empty churches. Visits to hospitals and even to homes had been prohibited. Deputation meetings, outreaches, the Ministers' Week of Prayer, the spring presbytery meeting, vacation Bible schools, youth camp, special meetings, and the mission trip to Liberia—all had been cancelled.

But the story wasn't all negative. Ministers and church people alike discovered different ways of doing things. They put Sermonaudio, Facebook, Zoom, Skype, and other platforms to good use for worship services, prayer meetings, Sunday school classes, session and committee meetings, and so on, and found that, while they were no substitute for assembling in person, the virtual meetings certainly made a difficult situation more bearable. They even brought unexpected blessings. People who had never entered the church buildings were regularly

joining the online services. And some people who, because of distance or health weren't normally able to attend prayer meetings, gladly joined in via Zoom and Skype.

Other Free Presbyterians found creative ways to use the internet. Rachel Huffman (Lehigh Valley) and Jacob Frank (Trinity) offered sacred concerts via Facebook and YouTube. Faith FPC joined forces with the Mexico City church to create a YouTube channel (Neighborhood Bible Club FPC) to give the gospel to Hispanic children all over the world. Faith FPC was also preparing a virtual VBS for posting on Sermonaudio June 22–26.

By the end of May, many churches had begun to meet again in limited ways, praying for wisdom as they did so and encouraging all to be charitable towards those with differing views on the pandemic and its handling. They were grateful that even though some of the North American churches were in high risk areas, there were only a few suspected cases of the virus among them. Some people in the U.S. and Canadian churches suffered job loss, furloughs, or cutbacks in their hours. Brothers and sisters in the Latin American works and in the Liberian mission work suffered and continue to suffer great economic hardship. The presbytery is overseeing efforts to assist them.

Many ministers have noted an increased interest in the things of the Lord and a greater sense of unity, mutual love, and increased care of church members for each other. One minister pointed out that the virus brought a welcome pause in some of the outward expressions of men's wickedness such as sodomite parades and night clubs. People have found new ways of witnessing to neighbors and of rebuilding family relationships. Some say the quarantine has given them time to settle down and be still before the Lord.

Our God, who does all things well, changed our plans for 2020. ❧



Mrs. Judy Brown
is a member of Faith FPC,
Greenville, SC.

A Disease Only God Can Cure



The last few weeks have been very strange, haven't they? Just like the coronavirus is affecting many people in our time, a terrible disease called leprosy struck during Bible times. Leprosy was an incurable infection that caused painful lumps on a person's skin. Often, people with leprosy were separated from their family, cast out of their cities, and sent to live in places called "leper colonies," kind of like being in quarantine!

Last time, we learned about young people who served the Lord, including an Israelite girl who helped save her master's life. 2 Kings 5 tells the story: Syrians had taken this girl captive during one of their raids and she became a maid for an army captain's wife. This Syrian captain was called Naaman, and he suffered from leprosy. The young maid told her mistress that Elisha, a prophet of God in her homeland, could heal Naaman's leprosy. The king of Syria found out about this and sent Naaman to Jehoram, king of Israel.

Naaman traveled over 700 miles from Syria to Samaria, bringing expensive gifts and a letter from the Syrian king, asking that Jehoram heal Naaman. Jehoram was so upset that he tore his clothes. He

didn't have power to heal Naaman, and he feared the Syrian king's anger if he couldn't grant his request. Elisha, the great prophet, heard of Jehoram's distress and asked Naaman to be brought to him. What a relief for Jehoram! Naaman soon arrived at Elisha's house. Imagine his excitement as he waited at the prophet's door! Instead of welcoming this important captain himself, Elisha sent a servant to tell Naaman to wash himself seven times in the nearby Jordan river and he would be healed. When Naaman heard this, he was angry! Jordan was a dirty river, not a grand, clean one like Naaman was used to. Proudful Naaman expected to be healed in an impressive way. He stormed off in a rage, ready to go home. But his servants begged him to do as Elisha asked. Finally, Naaman agreed and he washed in Jordan seven times. Not only was he healed of leprosy, but also his skin became like a child's, even better than before. What a miracle!

Naaman's story doesn't end there: coming from a heathen land, he didn't know the true God. After being healed, Naaman acknowledged that the God of Israel was the only God in all the earth. He was healed

physically, but God met his greater need: healing him of the disease of *sin*.

Naaman's story teaches us two important lessons: first, even a child like this young maid can lead someone to Jesus Christ, and second, we must humble ourselves and repent of our sin in order to be forgiven.

Do you know Jesus as your Savior? Are you too proud to admit your sin just like Naaman was too proud to wash in the Jordan river? Humble yourself and come to Christ for forgiveness!

If you know Jesus, you are not too young to do something great for Him. This little maid's name is never mentioned in the Bible, just as your name may never be famous. But we do know what she *did* for God. I encourage you to read this story in 2 Kings 5 and ask the Lord what you can do for Him today. ✨



Rachel Huffman
is a member of Lehigh Valley FPC, PA.

A WORD WORTH KNOWING

Repentance

Being sorry for and turning away from your sin



Spring 2020

★ **Allison Pike**
Malvern FPC

★ **Andrew Pike**
Malvern FPC

★ **Talitha Backhurst**
Calgary FPC

★ **Abby Seifert**
Malvern FPC

★ **Lilyanna Seifert**
Malvern FPC

Kids' Crossword Puzzle

Answers are found in 2 Kings 5

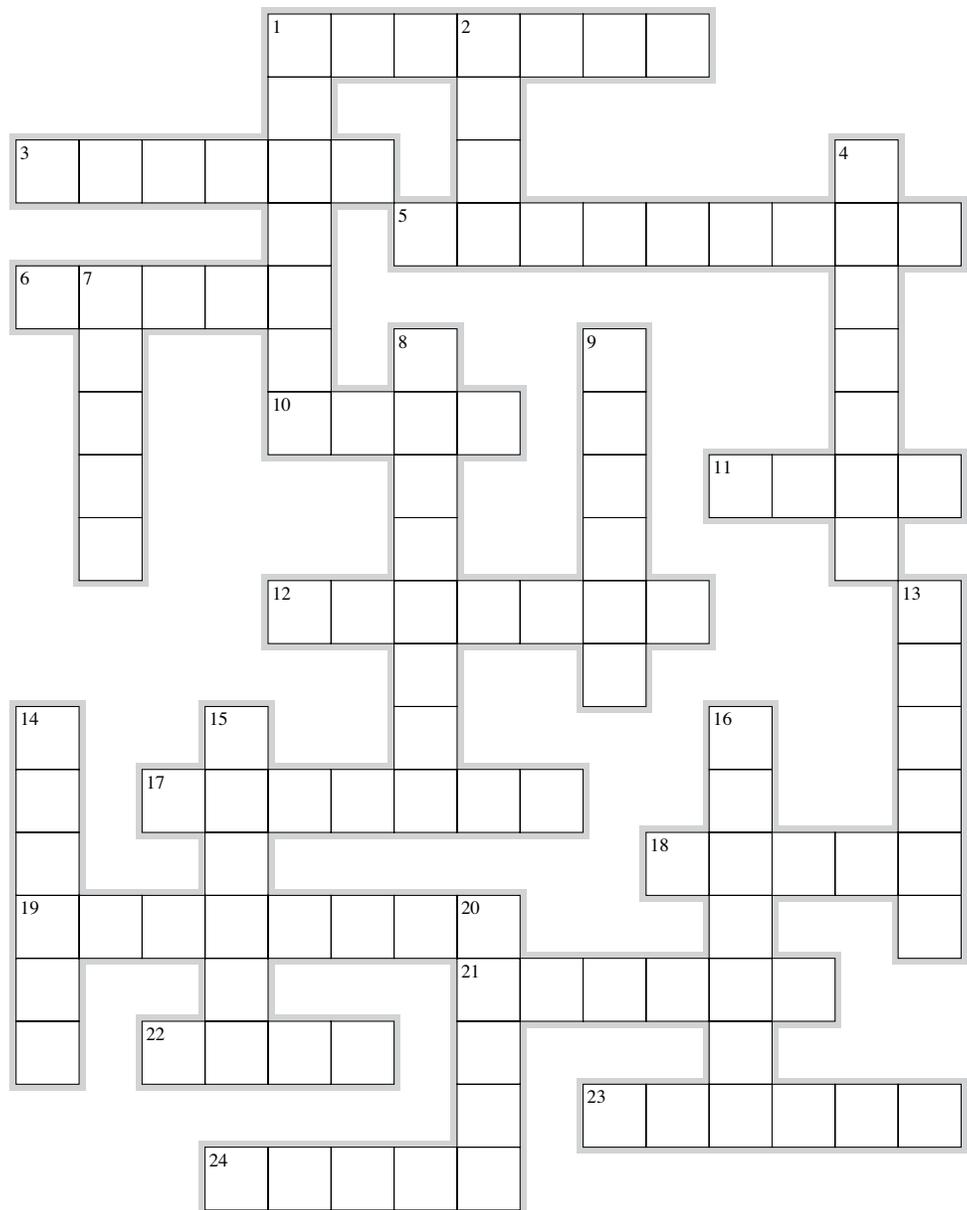
Answers must be spelled correctly.

Across

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Naaman's transportation | 14. Where did Elisha tell Naaman to go? | 16. The maid said he could heal Naaman |
| 3. Syrian god | 15. Elisha's servant | 20. Number of times Naaman dipped himself |
| 5. Elisha sent this to Naaman | | |
| 6. It became like that of a little child | | |
| 10. Gehazi's sin also affected his what? | | |
| 11. What did Elisha tell Naaman to do? | | |
| 12. A river Naaman preferred | | |
| 17. Elisha did this when Naaman offered a gift | | |
| 18. Gehazi hides silver and garments there | | |
| 19. Location of the river Abana | | |
| 21. The man of God | | |
| 22. The king of Syria asked him to heal Naaman | | |
| 23. His servants call Naaman this | | |
| 24. Naaman after he did what Elisha told him to do | | |

Down

1. The king of Israel rent this
2. Naaman's first reaction to Elisha's instructions
4. The captain's disease
7. Gehazi becomes this because of his lies
8. Who convinced Naaman to do what Elisha said?
9. Captain of the host of the king of Syria
13. Homeland of the little maid



PLEASE NOTE: Please send your completed puzzle to Current Kids' Corner, c/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650, or by email to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by Sept. 25, 2020. Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. The contest is open to young people ages 5–12. Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



“To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

This is one of many promises of God held out to believing souls. It is a sad fact, however, as C.H. Spurgeon once pointed out, that fear to believe is “an odd product of our unhealthy nature.” The Word of God states that “whosoever believeth” in the Lord Jesus shall not perish, and yet we search for arguments why *we* should perish if we did believe. The problem with some is fear that they may not be included among those for whom God’s promise is intended. As Spurgeon put it, “Do not be alarmed by that idle suspicion. No soul ever came to Jesus wrongly.” When it comes to saving faith, the Bible says several important things.

The Origin of Faith

Scripture teaches that faith is “the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29). Why do some believe while others do not? Our text (John 1:12) is followed by verse 13. Those who receive Christ, who “believe on His Name” are “born...of God.” The originator of spiritual life is not man, but God. The work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration—the New Birth—produces a reliance upon, and trust in, Jesus Christ. Men come to believe “through grace” (Acts 18:27). The only reason anyone comes to Christ is that he has been drawn by the Spirit, and enabled to lay hold upon the promise of God by faith. While no sinner has power to create faith, yet saving trust in Jesus is granted by God to him, whereby he is enabled to embrace Christ freely offered to him in the gospel. Thus he believes and is saved.

The Operation of Faith

While it is the gift of the Holy Ghost, faith is an act of man. The regenerate soul lays hold upon Christ. By faith he receives and rests upon Jesus Christ, and His work alone for salvation. Paul preached “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Believing is the action of the renewed heart: a conscious activity of the quickened soul. Everywhere in Scripture it is taught that the benefits of Christ’s death are received by faith. Faith is not a work; it has no merit in it. The Bible never says a man is saved on account of his faith, but always “through” his faith. It is a ceasing from work, and a resting upon what Christ has done. As J.G. Machen said: “Faith consists not in doing something, but in receiving something.” It is an activity of the whole soul, a conscious act.

The Object of Faith

The general object of faith—that to which faith looks—is the promise of God’s Word. The specific object is Christ. There is in saving faith a receiving of Him, and a believing on His name. Faith looks to Jesus only. This is spoken of in various ways in the New Testament. A believer comes to Christ, looks to Christ, rests upon Christ, leans upon Christ, trusts in Christ, and calls upon Christ. It is His spotless Person, and sacrificial work alone, that the believer depends upon. Have you looked to Christ to save your soul? In the gospel there is a full, free invitation to do so: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). Fear not to approach Him. He has promised never to cast out the soul that comes to Him (John 6:37).

TRUSTING THE LORD

Rev. Stephen Hamilton

*Only trust Him, only trust Him, only trust Him now;
He will save you—Hallelujah! He will save you now!*