

Clarion

**Grateful hearts
lead to God's glory**

IS CAPITALISM SATANIC?

CLARION KIDS

YOU ASKED



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Thanksgiving is to Praise God

An awareness of the Lord as the Almighty God of heaven and earth is critically important for our thanksgiving celebration

A few years ago my wife and I enjoyed a short holiday to the U.S. during the American Thanksgiving. We were in for a bit of a culture shock, as people everywhere asked what we were doing for Thanksgiving, something rarely heard in Canada. We learned quickly that Thanksgiving is a big event as people travel from everywhere to enjoy time with family. Tradition has it that the first thanksgiving was celebrated in America at Plymouth by the Puritan settlers in 1621. Thanksgiving in North America has its origins in a Christian feast day as new arrivals to America gave thanks to Almighty God for the provisions they could store away for another winter. Early American settlers understood their reliance upon God's continual care for the bounty of the land. They had a deep awareness of their complete dependence on God and wanted to show gratitude for his blessings.

Grateful hearts lead to praise

One of the great themes in Scripture is the faithfulness of God who in his mercy provides for the needs of his people. Psalm 107 begins with the exhortation to "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever." The psalmist contrasts the many failings of God's people with the faithfulness of God. When Israel became unfaithful to her Lord, they suffered serious consequences for their rebellion, but when they again cried out to the Lord in repentance, in his mercy the Lord came to their rescue.

A knowledge of God for the Israelites was not just an intellectual exercise; they experienced a living relationship with him. They witnessed the power of God when he protected them from their enemies and they also felt the wrath and anger of God when he punished them. Through-

out their history the Lord revealed himself as the living God who is the sovereign ruler over the whole earth.

He is the Almighty who brings Pharaoh to his knees in order to let Israel go. He has the power to open the Red Sea for his people to escape and cause the sea to collapse and drown Pharaoh with his mighty army. He has the power to send manna from heaven and water from the rock in the wilderness and he has the power to make the city walls of Jericho crumble. On those occasions, when Israel experienced the great power of God, they were filled with gratitude and praised him for his goodness and love.

An awareness of the Lord as the Almighty God of heaven and earth is critically important for our thanksgiving celebration. As New Testament believers our knowledge of God has been wonderfully enriched. Today we know the Lord God as our Father, who has revealed his tender love and mercy through his Son, Jesus Christ. The thanksgiving we experience in our hearts begins with the Lord Jesus, who not only died on the cross to pay for our sins, but also conquered death through his resurrection.

As the living Lord, he is not only concerned about our spiritual needs, but he also provides for our daily food and drink and supplies us with the material blessings we enjoy each day. Our entire life is completely dependent on Christ as Saviour. With grateful hearts we praise him for his goodness, for his love endures for ever.

Grateful hearts lead to a sanctified life

If Thanksgiving in North America has its origin in a Christian feast day, then we wonder what its relevance is today for people in an increasingly secular culture? When people no longer acknowledge God as the Almighty, Thanksgiving Day is turned into a day of self-gratification.

Now people express thankfulness only for the things that give them personal pleasure or for their own personal achievements. The focus of thanksgiving in our culture has turned from a focus on God to a focus on the self.

This is not surprising when you keep in mind the sinful nature of humanity. In his letter to the believers in Rome Paul directs our attention to the incredible foolishness of mankind. He writes, "Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God *nor gave thanks* to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom 1:21). In addition, he writes that although mankind claims to be wise, they became fools, for what they did is to exchange the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like the very creatures created by God. In effect Paul argues that all humanity looks to the material things created by God to fill the deepest longings in their heart. They express gratitude only for the creaturely comforts that they feel will fulfill the deepest desires of their heart.

Paul writes to Timothy about the terrible consequences this will have for all humanity in the last days. Paul understands that today we are living in the last days. In these last days, he writes, "people will

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

In this our 2016 Thanksgiving issue, Rev. Matthew Van Luik joins our editorial team. We are thankful to have him – welcome! In his editorial, Rev. Van Luik examines the importance of giving thanks to God, rather than making this holiday one of self-gratification. The Treasures New and Old meditation is also Thanksgiving-themed.

Earlier issues of our magazine published blog articles from David Robertson of the Free Church of Scotland. We end the three-part series with his final article, "Is Capitalism Satanic?" The question comes down to which views our life should centre around.

Issue 19 includes the Clippings on Politics and Religion column, as well as You Asked, *Clarion* Kids, Ray of Sunshine, and a press release.

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be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:2). Paul could not have described the culture in which we live today more accurately, even though he wrote two thousand years ago. When the Lord God is not the focus of thanksgiving, such a lack of gratitude leads to an unholy and wicked culture.

We experience this in our personal lives when our focus turns away from the Lord God. When our merciful and gracious God is no longer the focus, the focus turns on the self and the desires of our own heart. We discover that already in the life of God's own people Israel. When the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt, they were overjoyed at what God had done for them. But when they travelled through the wilderness they began to focus on the things they missed in Egypt, where they had enjoyed a great variety of food and drink. They became ungrateful to the Lord for his deliverance and demanded Moses to take them back to Egypt, for they said it was better there. An ungrateful attitude led to rebellion against God, for in their own wisdom the people thought that they knew better than God what they needed.

In our own culture, mankind rejects the wisdom of God to follow the foolish desires of their own heart. People have become lovers of money as they seek to fill the deepest passions of their heart through their material wealth. Today, they give thanks for the ability to abort their children when it is not expedient to have them, they are thankful for the right to kill those who no longer have a desire to live, they are thankful with the freedom to choose whatever kind of relationship they desire and they think themselves wise when they overturn God's creation order with regard to our sexuality.

Thanksgiving Day in our culture has been divorced from its original intent to give thanks to God. The reality is that people in our culture have become lovers of self and any culture focused on the self never ends well, as such a society will tear itself apart. Over against the inward focus of this society, believers are to respond with thankfulness for the glorious hope God gives us in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:28 encourages, "Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire." Thanksgiving Day is never about us, but God's work for us in Christ Jesus. That makes it possible in all circumstances, both in good and difficult situations, to have a heart that is filled with thankfulness. Would you give up the kingdom of God

that can never be shaken for all the money in the world? Would you give up the kingdom of God for a better home, better food, health, or nicer vacations? If you had the option to make the deepest passion of your heart a reality by rejecting the kingdom of heaven, what would you do?

Our heart often tells us that material and earthly things are all that really matter today. A heart full of gratitude sees through the foolish short term thinking of our sinful heart and is thankful for the glorious hope we have in Jesus Christ. I may be poor today by earthly standards, but I am incredibly rich in Christ for eternity. True thanksgiving is to desire with my whole heart to worship God with great reverence and awe. Make it your daily prayer: "Lord give me the strength to live each day out of gratitude, that my heart may be filled with joy in you."

Grateful hearts lead to God's glory

The ultimate goal of our thanksgiving is to give glory and praise to the Lord. A thankful heart looks to God in childlike trust for everything. Gratitude causes us to think less of ourselves and more of God. This new attitude no longer focuses on what I want, or think I deserve, but it is thankful for whatever the Lord gives to me. That is a challenge when our heart tells us that the Lord is not treating us justly. When others have more money, better health, closer friends, greater popularity, the natural response in my heart is envy and jealousy. When we face injustice or suffering, the natural response is to feel that the Lord is treating us unjustly. It is a challenge to experience joy and contentment in every circumstance.

The reason is that we easily lose sight of what is truly important. Paul reminds the believers in Corinth about the real source of gratitude. It is not found in the material things of this life, but in what the Lord has given us in Jesus Christ. Although Paul was not a man of wealth and he endured many hardships and much suffering, yet his greatest joy is that, "We know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence." He says, "All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God" (2 Cor 4:13-15).

As the gospel of God's grace makes its way into the world, it causes more and more people to give thanks to God for his precious gift of life in Jesus Christ. What do earthly things matter anymore when the Lord gives us the greatest gift, eternal life in his kingdom? It is the gift that causes us to lift up our voices in thanksgiving and praise to his glory. Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.





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Reflect, Rejoice, and Remember

Deuteronomy 16:9-12

The feast that's described in Deuteronomy 16:9-12 had a few different names. We probably know it best as Pentecost. It was also called the Feast of Harvest. It took place when the grapes and the olives were still ripening, but the grain had been brought in, and stored away. So it was like our Thanksgiving Day, a feast to celebrate the harvest.

Above and beyond several prescribed sacrifices that the LORD commanded them to bring, he also told them to bring freewill offerings. But Moses didn't just say, "See how much you made last year, and give a percentage of it to the LORD." He says to give "a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you." They had to sit down, and think about what the LORD had given them, and decide what they would present as a token of their thankfulness.

The LORD was forcing his people to reflect on the fact that it was the LORD who had given them the harvest. He wanted to them to confess

it, in order to cultivate thankfulness. Because reflecting on God's goodness nourishes our thankfulness and strengthens our faith. Thankfulness motivates worship.

When he allowed them to decide what they would give as a freewill offering, it was a kind of a test. All of the other sacrifices were prescribed; the people had no choice in the matter. But, when they brought a freewill offering, how much they gave was up to them. That would show what really lived in their hearts. That would reveal how thankful they were.

Moses also said, "Rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name." In years to come, the roads of Israel would be filled with travellers from all over the country, all on their way to Jerusalem. God got his people out on the road, with all of the discomforts and inconveniences of travel in those days, because it's critical for God's people to remember that we're pilgrims, especially when it comes to

the way we think about our income and our possessions. We're looking for a country of our own, a better, heavenly one (Heb 4:14, 16). We confess that this world doesn't hold all of the answers to our questions, or the meaning of our lives.

In verse 12, the LORD reveals the fundamental motivation for celebrating the Feast of Weeks: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees." Thanksgiving is not just for one day of the year; for believers, it's a way of life, and our reason for living. And this is the root of all of our thanksgiving: beyond the good gifts that God gives us, beyond the prosperity that we enjoy, we give thanks to God for our salvation in Jesus Christ: we were slaves, and now we're free. "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship" (Rom 12:1).

For Further Study

1. Why did the LORD command Israel to celebrate the Feast of Weeks?
2. Why would a freewill offering be a clear indication of what lived in the people's hearts?
3. Why do God's people need to confess that we are "aliens and strangers on the earth" (Hebr 11:13)?
4. How can we show our thankfulness for the salvation we have received in Jesus Christ?



Is Capitalism Satanic?



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This article was originally published on Rev. Robertson's blog, The Wee Flea, in February 2016. It is reprinted with permission.

The best introduction to a talk I have ever heard was when I heard an African American at the Twin Lakes Conference begin his talk with the following words: "Well, here I am. A black guy. With 200 plus mostly white guys. In Mississippi. In the woods. It ain't looking good!" I thought it was funny. As did, as far as I could gather, most of the people there. But what surprised me was that there were those who were not pleased. I'm not sure why. Did they not want to be reminded of the not too distant racist past of much of their culture? Did some of that still remain? Whatever the reason it was clear that the speaker had touched upon a still deeply sensitive issue. Over the past couple of days I have been reminded of that.

It is a cultural thing. Most people in Europe would regard the article on The Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals which stated that "Socialism was evil" as being right wing American hyperbole – see for example the reaction from Saints and Sceptics in Northern Ireland.

But here is the surprise. There are many American evangelicals who are fed up with this kind of nonsense, and most of the reaction I have had from the US has been really positive. Those evangelicals who continue to identify evangelicalism with American Capitalism need to take heed that they are losing their own people. They need to understand that they are not losing them because of liberalism but because of this distorted view of religion and politics.

However, I thought I would finish this mini-series by asking, not "Is Socialism evil?" but "Is Capitalism evil?" As with Socialism, let's make sure we define our terms correctly.

Capitalism [noun]: "An economic and political system in which a country's trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state."

This is the mirror opposite of the definition we gave for Socialism where the state controls the means of production.

Socialism [noun]: "A political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole."

Just as there are those who argue that Socialism is evil, so there are those who argue that Capitalism is evil. They cite the greed, the reliance on interest rates, the worship of mammon, and they have no problem in identifying the commerce of today with the Babylon of the book of Revelation. Like those who argue that Socialism is evil, there is more than a grain of truth in what they say. But they are wrong, because the question is meaningless.

I am not going to go into the various merits of these two particular economic systems, because that is a political, not a moral or theological argument. Evil is what is in the human heart, not the economic system.

To put it another way, I think that the capitalist system, if perfect human beings ran it, would be a perfect system. If perfect human beings ran the socialist system it would also be a perfect system. Neither system is *per se* evil. Neither system will ever save us. For Christians to put their faith in a particular political/economic system or, when that system is criticised, to act as though blasphemy had been spoken is, to say the least, an unbiblical distortion. At a practical level I personally don't care if the State is running the train company, or a private millionaire, as long as the trains run on time, the workers are well paid, health and safety are taken care off, and the opportunity to travel is given to all.

In reality most countries are run on a mixed economy; government does some things better, and private companies do others. Where the balance lies is in biblical terms *adiaphora* ("things indifferent"). It is the job of government to ensure that there is justice and peace; a level playing field, provision for the poor, protection for the weak, and limits placed on the powerful.

So let's come back to the main issue here.

The identification of one system with Christianity

I could of course write about those who identify Christianity with Socialism, but since that is not the article I am responding to, please take it as a given that the same standards apply on the other side. I am not writing in defence of Socialism. I am arguing in defence of the gospel.

And this is the really important issue. I am convinced that there are sections of the American church who have got caught up in the whole culture wars thing and as a result they read the Bible through the eyes of their culture, rather than read the culture through the eyes of the Bible (a danger that all of us can fall into).

An example of this is the way that some Christians are for government restrictions on abortion but are fanatically pro-choice when it comes to money. The pro-choice feminists argue for human autonomy when it comes to the human body – “It’s my body and the State does not have the right to tell me what to do with my body!” Christians rightly point out that God forbids murder of human beings and the child in the womb is a human being and look to the government to restrict the practice. However, those very same people will then be pro-choice when it comes to money – “It’s my money and the State does not have the right to tell me what to do with my money!” Do you see the inconsistency?

***They need to understand that they
are not losing them because of liberalism
but because of this distorted view
of religion and politics***

Just as God has ordained the body, the family, and the church, so he has ordained the State and he has commanded us to pay our taxes to support that State. This is the teaching of the Bible.

It is also the teaching of the historic Reformed faith, which is why it is astounding that even Reformed historians like D.G. Hart, who seems to have a profound dislike of me (although he seems to have a profound dislike for most people, so I don’t take it personally!) and Reformed theologians like R.C. Sproul Junior, seem to be quite happy to overturn both Scripture and history in defence of their



political views. Once again I am indebted to Dr. John Ross for weighing in with a wider more balanced historical theological perspective. John, who in no circumstances could be described as left-wing or socialist, writes the following (it is lengthy but well worth reading!):

Rick Phillips and R C Sproul Jnr. and those who follow their line of argument, demonstrate an anarchic spirit totally alien to historical Calvinism. In the *Institutes* (4. 22. 20: Of Civil Government) Calvin argues that taxation is necessary for the public good, but enters a caveat that the prerogative ought not be abused by rulers for personal aggrandisement:

“Lastly, we think it proper to add, that taxes and imposts are the legitimate revenues of princes, which they are chiefly to employ in sustaining the public burdens of their office. These, however, they may use for the maintenance of their domestic state, which is in a manner combined with the dignity of the authority which they exercise. Thus we see that David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Jehoshaphat, and other holy kings, Joseph also, and Daniel, in proportion to the office which they sustained, without offending piety, expended liberally of the public funds; and we read in Ezekiel, that a very large extent of territory was assigned to kings (Ezek. 48:21). . . . Princes, however, must remember, in their turn, that their revenues are not so much private chests as treasuries of the whole people. . . which they cannot, without manifest injustice, squander or dilapidate; or rather, that they are almost the blood of the people, which it were the harshest inhumanity not to spare. They should

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CHURCH NEWS

also consider that their levies and contributions, and other kinds of taxes, are merely subsidies of the public necessity, and that it is tyrannical rapacity to harass the poor people with them without cause. These things do not stimulate princes to profusion and luxurious expenditure (there is certainly no need to inflame the passions, when they are already, of their own accord, inflamed more than enough), but seeing it is of the greatest consequence that, whatever they venture to do, they should do with a pure conscience, it is necessary to teach them how far they can lawfully go, lest, by impious confidence, they incur the divine displeasure. Nor is this doctrine superfluous to private individuals, that they may not rashly and petulantly stigmatise the expenditure of princes, though it should exceed the ordinary limits.”

Biblical, Christ-centred theology at the centre with varied political views at the periphery

Similarly, John Knox had no inhibitions regarding the legitimacy of taxation (called *Tiends* in Scotland). He not only approved the use of parish tiends for the support of the poor, the upkeep of parish schools and the ministry of the church, but also sheltered the poor from heavy demands passed on by landlords in increased rents to cover their own tax obligations. He approved the principle of progressive taxation of the rich and argued for the removal of tax exemption bestowed on some of the wealthy by favour of the Queen. Knox’s approach to taxation laid the foundation of Scottish Calvinism’s historical commitment towards social and political justice.

Rev. Dr. John S. Ross

I have been stunned at how otherwise intelligent people have reacted to my statement that some people regard all taxation as evil. I was exaggerating to make a point. So I was astonished when otherwise intelligent people wrote

me and said that they agreed! Not only is this illogical, but it is profoundly unbiblical and goes directly the teaching of Paul in Romans 13:6, 7: “This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God’s servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.”

It fits the populist philosophy of Donald Trump, “Only a fool pays taxes,” but it is not the teaching of Christ. Are we Christians or Trumpians?

As I indicated, this is a serious issue facing the American church. If we do not deal with the heresy of associating Christ and his gospel as being synonymous with free market Capitalism, then the US is going to go down the tubes even faster than the UK did. People have to see that the choice is not between political/theological liberalism and political/theological conservatism but that there is another way; biblical, Christ-centred theology at the centre with varied political views at the periphery.



Evil is what is in the human heart, not the economic system

You cannot be a Christian and hold to a liberal theology because the liberal Christ is no Christ at all. However, you can be a Christian and hold to a conservative, socialist, etc. politics. What is needed here is not just quiet agreement (“We agree but we have to keep quiet because there are wealthy people in our congregation/network who will get upset and withdraw their support if we dare to challenge”) but robust, Christ-centred challenge. It’s all very well denouncing the heresies from the past and the heresies in other churches and groups, but it just becomes hypocrisy if we don’t have the guts to deal with the heresies in our own midst.

C

Russia Forbids Evangelization



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Throughout Russia's history until the 1917 Communist revolution, there has been a very close connection between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state. This church, and for that matter all Christians, sustained much hardship during the atheist Communist regimes that followed. However, it appears that after about one hundred years since the revolution, the Russian Orthodox Church has regained most of its prestige and accompanying power that it had benefited from under the Romanovs. A lot of the credit for that goes to the current President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. He made it possible for about 23,000 destroyed or neglected churches to be rebuilt. State-owned companies contributed billions of rubles for the cause. Church property seized during the Soviet era has all been returned to the Church so that the Moscow Patriarchate is now the largest landowner in Russia. On moral issues Putin has followed the Orthodox teaching on abortion and gay rights. All in all, there are no conflicts between church and state. Indeed, new legislation indicates growing protection for the privileged position of the Russian Orthodox Church.

On July 7, 2016, Putin signed into law a bill that was formally introduced as an anti-terrorism measure so that the government could monitor extremist groups. According to *World Watch Monitor*, "Its biggest impact may be upon Russia's Christians, particularly missionaries, who will need a permit, and the so-called 'house churches,' which will soon be deemed illegal, as religious activity will only be allowed to take place inside registered buildings, such as churches. Maximum fines amount to the equivalent of \$780 for individuals or \$15,000 for organisations." The law will not really affect the Russian Orthodox Church, which embraces ninety percent of ethnic Russians, but it will have a huge impact on any other believer, especially Protestants, who comprise only one percent of the population.

There have been vigorous protests but they will be to no avail given the whole situation and Russia's religious heritage. The law is very harsh. A letter, signed, among others, by Sergei Ryakhovsky, head of the Protestant Churches of Russia, states that "the obligation on every believer to have a special permit to spread his or her beliefs, as well as hand out religious literature and material outside of places of worship and used structures is not only absurd and offensive, but also creates the basis for mass persecution of believers for violating these provisions. Soviet history shows us how many people of different faiths have been persecuted for spreading the Word of God. This law brings us back to a shameful past." The letter also notes that this is "the most draconian antireligion bill to be proposed in Russia since Nikita Khrushchev promised to eliminate Christianity in the Soviet Union." Sharing religious views online is also illegal.

According to *Christian Daily* (July 5, 2016), raids on religious services deemed illegal are already taking place in Belarus and Kazakhstan. In one instance, twenty law enforcers broke into a private home in the middle of a religious service. The owners of the home were charged with conducting unauthorized missionary activity even though everyone who was there was already a member. Bibles and religious books were seized as well. In another case a Polish citizen was charged with violating the law by conducting religious services even though this was not the case. He was merely participating in the service. Nevertheless, he was fined and deported.

Not surprisingly, foreign missionaries have found it is next to impossible to get or renew a visa to enter Russia. For now the members of the Russian Orthodox Church would appear to be more "safe" from Protestant influences. That is a huge tragedy. The riches of the Reformation would be such a blessing for the people of Russia. **C**

Clarion Kids

The Golden Calf

Exodus 32

While the people of Israel were travelling in the desert, God called Moses up onto Mount Sinai so He could give him the Ten Commandments. He was gone so long that the people thought he wasn't going to come back. They made a gold idol in the shape of a calf and had a big party. They worshipped the idol instead of God. God was very angry. Moses was very angry too. He smashed the Ten Commandments and burned the idol. He ground it up into the water the people drank. The people got very sick, but God was merciful and did not completely destroy them.

Across

3. The golden calf was an _____.
5. Moses ground up the idol and made the people _____ it.
6. The people had a _____ to worship the idol.

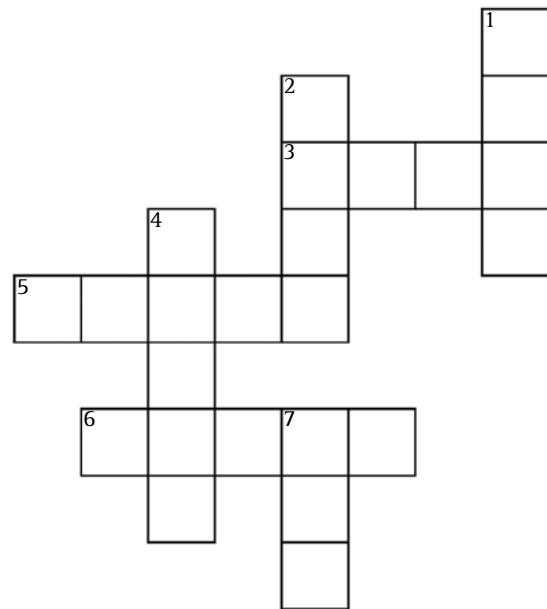
Down

1. Israel worshipped a golden _____.
2. God punished Israel by making them _____.
4. Moses went up on Mount _____.
7. God gave Moses the ____ Commandments.

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Crossword Puzzle: Solve the clues on the left to fill in the puzzle below!



by Emily Nijenhuis

Thanksgiving!

I'm thankful to God
Because He died for me!
Now He lives again,
Never more to die;
He is my Saviour on High!

I'm thankful that God
Is there when I fall.
Through Grace Alone,
Because of His love,
He is there when I call!

I'm thankful to God
For all of His gifts to me!
He knows my daily needs;
Freely He will give!
Friends and family very dear;
Capable hands He sends for my care.

I'm thankful to God
For the Promises He gives!
Though undeserving;
If I obey Him,
If I seek to do His Will;
Forever with my Saviour I'll live!

The Lord has richly blessed each and every one of us in many different ways. This poem is a good reminder for all of us that the Lord is in control, and has given all of us many rich blessings. Let us all continue to strive to serve and obey him in everything we do, showing our thanksgiving to him. His hands continue to care for us through the ups and the downs. May we all continue to find our strength in him.

Thank you to Connie VanAmerongen for this beautifully written poem. The Lord has given her a talent of putting words to paper for all of us to enjoy.

We wish everyone a blessed thanksgiving with family and friends.



*Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!*
Psalm 95:1, 2

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- 3 JANELL DEBOER will be 26**
6311 Silver Street, RR 2, St. Ann's, ON LOR 1Y0
Email: janell.db90@gmail.com
- 3 JEANETTE WIERINGA will be 21**
610 Belsyde Avenue East, RR 4, Fergus, ON N1M 2W5
- 6 HENRY VANDER VLIET will be 49**
361 Thirty Road, RR 2, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
- 8 LINDSAY KOTTELENBERG will be 26**
c/o Lighthouse, 6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 12 LEONA BARENDREGT will be 32**
Box 2601, Smithers, BC VOJ 2N0
- 13 NANCY SCHIPPER will be 60**
c/o Beacon Home
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 17 ALAN BREUKELMAN will be 50**
19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 21 CAMERON DANTUMA will be 24**
c/o Lighthouse, 6528 1st Line, RR 3, Fergus, ON N1M 2W4
- 22 NELENA HOFSTINK will be 56**
Bethesda Clearbrook Home
32553 Willingdon Crescent, Clearbrook, BC V2T 1S2
- 28 MARY ANN DE WIT will be 60**
31126 Kingfisher Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4

Congratulations to all of you celebrating a birthday in October. We wish you the Lord's blessing in the year to come, and a wonderful day with family and friends.

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If there are any address or other changes that I need to be aware of please let me know as soon as possible.

Rachel Vis

731 Lincoln Street, Wellandport, Ontario LOR 2J0
tom.rachelvis@gmail.com • 905-329-9476





William den Hollander
Minister emeritus of the
Bethel Canadian Reformed
Church of Toronto, Ontario
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Q Are we able to (or should we) pray on behalf of other people for their sins, like Job did for his children (1:5) and Hezekiah for Israel (2 Chron 34:18)? Or asking God to forgive other people's sins, like Jesus did on the cross (Luke 23:34) and Stephen when he was stoned (Acts 7:60)? Somehow that doesn't seem quite right, other than asking God to have mercy on them and lead them to repentance.

A The matter of prayers for others, intercession, is rather common in the OT while mentioned in the NT as well. In the OT we see Abraham intercede for Abimelech (Gen 20:17) so that children could be born again to him and his people. Abraham also prayed for Sodom (Gen 18:24f). Isaac prayed for his wife (Gen 25:21) because she was barren, and the LORD granted his prayer. Moses prayed for Egypt, for Aaron and Miriam (Num 12:13) when they have confessed their guilt, again for Aaron (Num 16), and for Israel that the LORD would not destroy them (Exod 32:11; Deut 9:26). Isaiah prays for Hezekiah, regarding his illness (Isa 36-39), and Hosea prays for Israel that the LORD will punish them. We also see Jeroboam ask the man of God from Judah to pray for him, or Saul asking Samuel to do the same, and Zedekiah asking Jeremiah (Jer 37:3).

In other words, in situations of sins committed and their consequences shown, praying for God's mercy and for withholding his wrath is a common practice. When

Job suspected that his children could have sinned and even cursed God, he made a sacrifice to atone for these sins and prayed for them. When Hezekiah wanted to celebrate the Passover again and realized that some of his people weren't as sanctified as they should have been, he prayed and the LORD showed mercy, without imposing the punishment they deserved according to the Law. The LORD delayed judgment, in anticipation of the sacrifice of atonement the Messiah would make, and of a time for his people (and for the world later on) to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4).

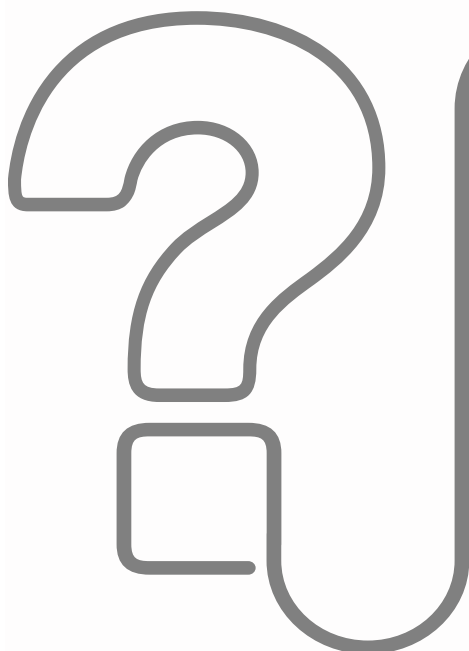
It's in this sense that the Lord Jesus said, "But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'" He himself prayed from the cross, making "intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53:12), saying, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." That is, "Father, at this moment let go of your judgment; don't execute it yet; delay punishment!" "Don't yet open the mouth of the earth to swallow them up, as that happened at the time with Dathan and Abiram, but let them come to repentance! Let them come to know what they

are doing!” The Apostle Peter articulated this sentiment in his speech on Pentecost (Acts 3:17), “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.” That’s also how Stephen came to pray for those who were stoning him, realizing that they were doing so in their sins, stubbornly resisting the Holy Spirit, yet pleading God for a time of grace!

In answer to the question, therefore, we may say in the first place that, yes, we may pray and should pray on behalf of others for their sins. Asking God to forgive people their sins is then indeed done in order that they may come to repentance. As the Lord Jesus put it, “Go, your sins are forgiven; sin no more!” That is, in other words, asking God to have mercy on them so that they come to repentance. This is also the intention of James in his epistle, chapter 5:14f, where he exhorts some who are sick to call the elders to pray over them. There, too, it is against the background of sins that caused sick-

ness (15) “that the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” Then James adds a more general exhortation, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” The illustration of Elijah’s prayer in this regard reiterates the connection of a sinful situation that leads to prayer and eventually to God’s show of mercy and withholding of further wrath. The Apostle Paul, in 1 Timothy 2, urges Timothy (and us) to pray for all sorts of people as well as something that’s pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, “Who desires all [sorts of] people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Again, that’s the gospel of salvation for everyone who believes (John 3:16), that they may receive the forgiveness of sins and true life, eternal life!

C



**Is there something
you’ve been wanting to know?**

An answer you’ve been looking for?

Ask us a question!

Please direct questions to Rev. W. denHollander

denhollanderw@gmail.com

23 Kinsman Drive, Binbrook, ON L0R 1C0

Classis Central Ontario Acts of Classis Contracta July 25, 2016 – Burlington, ON

Article 1

Elder R. Ludwig, on behalf of the convening church of Burlington-Waterdown, welcomes the delegates present. After reading from Isaiah 52:1-10 and having the assembly sing from Psalm 85:3, he led in prayer.

Article 2

The delegates from Burlington-Rehoboth examine the credentials. The following primi delegates are present for Classis Contracta:

Burlington-Rehoboth: Elder Lambert Jagt and Elder Rick Ludwig

Burlington-Ebenezer: Elder Jerry Bosscher and Elder Ben Poort

Burlington Flamborough: Elder Barry Hordyk and Rich Vanderlaan.

Article 3

Elder R. Ludwig declares Classis constituted. The assembly appoints as officers Elder R. Ludwig as chairman and Elder J. Bosscher as clerk.

Article 4

The agenda is adopted as follows:

1. Opening on behalf of the convening church of Burlington-Waterdown
2. Report on the examination of the credentials
3. Constitution of Classis Contracta
4. Appointment of officers
5. Adoption of the agenda
6. Approbation of call for Rev. A.B. Roukema to Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church, Burlington, Ontario
7. Question period
8. Censure according to Art. 34 C.O.
9. Adoption of the Acts and Press Release
10. Closing.

Article 5

The church at Burlington-Ebenezer requests Classis to approbate the call of Rev. A.B. Roukema from the Canadian Reformed Church of St. Albert as per Articles 5 and 9 of the Church Order. Burlington-Ebenezer provides as supporting documents for their request: a) letter of call from Burlington-Ebenezer and a letter of acceptance from Rev. A.B. Roukema; b) an attestation concerning Rev. A.B. Roukema's doctrine and conduct from the Canadian Reformed Church in St. Albert; c) declaration from the Canadian Reformed Church in St. Albert that Rev. A.B. Roukema has been honourably discharged from his service in that church; d) certificate of release from Classis Alberta; e) declaration from Burlington-Ebenezer that the proper announcements have been made and that the congregation has given its approval to the call.

Classis finds the documents in good order and decides: i) to approbate the call of Rev. A.B. Roukema to Burlington-Ebenezer; ii) to welcome Rev. A.B. Roukema as a minister in this classical resort and encourage him in his work; iii) to have Rev. A.B. Roukema sign the Classis subscription documents at the next classis; iv) to appoint Burlington Fellowship to represent Classis at the installation service on August 21, 2016 at 9:30 AM.

Article 6

Question period is held. The chairman determines that censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order is not necessary. The assembly adopts the Acts and instructs the clerk to prepare a press release.

Article 7

The chairman speaks words of thankfulness regarding the upcoming arrival of a pastor for Burlington Ebenezer, and appreciation that slow but sure Classis Central Ontario is receiving a full complement of ministers to serve the churches. He requests the assembly to sing from Hymn 26 and Elder B. Hordyk closes the meeting with prayer.

Clerk at that time,
Jerry Bosscher

