

- * **Alpha and Omega**
Revelation 1:8
- * **By Faith Looking For a City**
Hebrews 11:9, 10
- * **Not Just Hearers, But Doers**
James 1:22-25
- * **God's Everlasting Glory**
Romans 11:33-36

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Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma
Missionary-pastor of
Pittsburgh Protestant Reformed Fellowship
in Pittsburgh, PA

January 5, 2014 — No. 3705

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virtues. It is the effulgence of all the perfections of God. God radiates righteousness and justice, holiness and goodness, mercy and grace. He glows with His perfections. That is His glory. And in everything that He has planned and that He executes in this world, those virtues of God shine forth. Even the wicked fulfill exactly what God has chosen for them to fulfill. God's name is glorified in the earth. That does not change. It cannot change because God is God. Forever all glory belongs to God. Forever God's name will be remembered among God's people. God is King forever! Let the nations tremble. Praise the Lord, ye lands; nations, clap your hands. God is glorified among His people in this earth, and He will be glorified forever.

Doxology of Praise

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" God's riches are His virtues. He is a God who is rich beyond all thought. He is exalted on high with all the riches of His Being. God's wisdom is His ability by which He is able to carry out perfectly everything He has planned. God's knowledge is that foreknowledge by which He has seen and known all things perfectly in the counsel of His will. O the depths of the riches, wisdom, and knowledge of God. When in Jamaica, our

children discovered what was called a blue hole. It is said that this may have been the mouth of an ancient volcano. The water was crystal clear. You could look down into it and see its clearness, but it soon turned blue and then dark. The water was so deep that, even though it was perfectly clear, you were not able to see the bottom of it. What an eerie feeling it left a person, standing there on the edge of a hole filled with water not knowing how deep it is. That is the awe and amazement we have in our hearts today as we consider the depths of God's riches, wisdom, and knowledge. We will never in this life be able to fathom just how deep the mind of God is. We will never be able to scratch the surface of the knowledge that He gives to us of things eternal. Who among the race of man is able to see the bottom of God's virtues? Who will ever understand the depths of God's wisdom? Who can begin to imagine what God knows? This is the God whom we serve, fellow believers!

Amazing! Awesome! Wonderful! Do you believe in that God? He is a God of judgment! All men will stand before Him someday. No one escapes Him. Is your house in order? Are you right with God? The only way this is possible is through the blood of Christ. Let us bow together before the cross of Christ.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

January 5, 2014
No. 3705

Alpha and Omega
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

In this first broadcast of the new year we are going to consider Revelation 1:8. They are words of Jesus. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."

This verse of Scripture does not seem to say much about a new year. All it really does is give us a name of Christ. He is Alpha and Omega. But as we stand at the beginning of a new year—the year 2014—we need something to guide us through the year ahead. This verse will do that. How? It will serve to give you and me hope in this year to come. That is really what we need. The Word we need to hear as the new year dawns must be a Word of hope. That hope is given us in the name of Christ that we receive in this verse.

You see, the world in which we live is always changing. Time is like an ever rolling stream. In the year to come all of us will become another year older. There will be new events that

take place in our lives. In this year God will choose to take some of His people home to be with Him. Others will be given affliction and sorrow. Some will be given new joy, a reason to laugh and to rejoice. Time always changes things. But there is one thing in our lives that will never change—Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is the one who is and was and is to come. And for that reason our Lord and Savior is the rock to which we will cling again in this year to come for comfort and strength. He will guard through dangers all, will not suffer me to fall.

All this is found in a name. What name? Alpha and Omega. This is a name that is unique to the book of Revelation. It is mentioned four times in this book of the Bible, and each time it is Christ Himself who calls Himself by that name. No one addresses Him by this name. It is a name that Christ uses to speak of Himself. For that reason, it is a special name. It is a name that Christ sets aside to encourage us.

It is this name of Christ that we wish to have on our lips throughout the new year to come—a name we can call upon for our hope and strength.

The Identity

The One who calls Himself Alpha and Omega in our text is none other than Christ. But what is on the foreground regarding Christ is that He is Lord. In other words, *the Lord* calls Himself the Alpha and Omega. I am Alpha and Omega, *saith the Lord*. The risen and ascended Lord, who sits at the right hand of God and rules in the heavens, says: I am Alpha and Omega. That is the truth that stands out here in this verse. Christ is Lord!

A lord is a man having power and authority over others. He is a man of rank and high position. That position of authority over others belongs to that lord by virtue of hereditary right and/or because he has earned that position of honor and power. For that reason, one who is a lord exercises leadership and exercises great power, and those under him must render him honor, service, and obedience.

As we enter into the year 2014, it is encouraging to know that Christ is such a Lord. In fact, He is *the* Lord. There is no one of higher power and rank, no one of higher authority and

honor, than Christ. He is the sovereign Lord who rules over all. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! For those who believe in this Lord, there is nothing more encouraging in this year to come than to know that! Christ's rank and position is His by hereditary right! He is the very Son of God. By virtue of His divinity alone Christ rules. But Christ has also earned this position and power on the cross, where He defeated His enemies and ours. There He overcame sin and death. He conquered Satan. He did battle against the wicked world and He overcame.

Because of what Christ accomplished on the cross, God gave Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. Christ sits at God's right hand and rules over all creatures great and small, in heaven and on earth! And everyone is called to render service, obedience, and honor. Christ sits on His throne in heaven right now. He is Lord!

This gives the believer hope for the year to come because this Lord who sovereignly reigns in the heavens is our Savior! When He went to the cross, He did so on our behalf. He conquered sin and Satan for you and me. He now sits in heaven and reigns over all things *for the church*. His rule is for our benefit. That

God in creation. This is true of where each of us is going when we die. Our eternal destiny is determined for us by God in His plan for all things. If this were not true, then who, pray tell, determines the end of man? Either God is the origin of everything that takes place, or some things find their origin in someone or something other than God. And if that is the case, God is no longer God! Deny that all things are of God and you deny God. That, of course, is what has happened in our society and world today: God is denied!

Likewise, it is denied by the unbelieving world that all things are *through* God. There is the second preposition: all things are *through* Him. This means simply that everything that takes place in this world does so in the exact way that God has chosen for it. God's hand of providence guides the working out of God's eternal plan. Nothing happens in this world by chance—nothing. *All things* are through God. This is true of creation, the fall of man into sin, the coming of Jesus Christ into this world, and the end of this world. This is true of the salvation of each one of God's people. All those brought to faith and repentance in Christ Jesus are saved because of God's sovereign and free election—not on the basis of what man does but on the basis of what God does in Christ. Of God are all things,

and through Him too. He has planned and He carries out His plan in the most excellent and just manner.

And this is why all things are *to* God as well. They are of Him, through Him, and to Him. Calvin writes about this last phrase: "The import of what is said is, that the whole order of nature would be strangely subverted, were not God, who is the beginning of all things, the end also." God is the first and the last. God is the sole purpose of all things. He has willed and created all things for one end—to glorify Himself. That means that everything He has willed and everything that takes place in this world will ultimately end in Him. It cannot be otherwise. Look at this creation, people of God. Look at the events that take place in this world. Look at your own salvation in Christ. To what do they all point? Everything points to God! How can anyone begin to think that man and this present world is the goal of all things? God is the end of all things.

This is why Paul adds at the end of verse 36, "to whom be the glory forever." God's is the glory. If of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, then His is the glory. This is the unalterable reality of which these verses speak. God's *is* the glory, no matter what happens. God's glory is the shining forth of His

making? Is man so wise and so knowledgeable that God sought out man's counsel in order to determine what He wanted to do? Come now, man! Who are you, but a creature of the hand of God! We are nothing more than an ant. Do you need an ant to help you determine what you want to do? Do you stoop down on the sidewalk and ask advice of an ant? Why would God need man, to ask of him counsel!

Or maybe man thinks that God owes him something, so that God ought to consult him first before making decisions regarding our destiny. Who has first given to God and it shall be recompensed unto him again? That is the idea of this question of verse 35. Have we given something of such great value to God that He owes us an explanation for what He does? We have not even given something of little value to God. He owes you and me nothing. Certainly He does not owe us an explanation for His sovereign decree of predestination! God chooses whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens in sin. And what goes beyond our human understanding in this we have no business asking. God is God! We stand in awe before Him. We stand in dread before Him. We stand in amazement before Him!

...what goes beyond
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no business asking.

How little we are and how great He is!

An Unalterable Reality

Three questions arise out of the wonder and amazement Paul has for the great God of heaven and earth. None of them he expects to be answered. They are rhetorical questions. All three are meant to be given one answer: no one. No one knows God's mind. No one is His counselor. God owes no one an explanation. And this is true because of an unalterable reality: God is God. Paul states it this way in verse 36, "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Those three little prepositions say it all. All things are *of* God. That is to say, He is the origin of all things. All things in this world owe their existence to God. God has willed them all from eternity in His eternal plan. God has created them all in the beginning. All is creature except God, who alone is Creator. Who we are, what we are, why we are, all find their answers in God. Everything that we see taking place in this present world; everything that has taken place in this world; everything that will take place—all finds its origin in the plan of God. This is not only true of the works of

in turn means that whatever may befall you, or me, or the church in the year to come is all in His hands.

How often we have to remind ourselves of that, do we not? When life does not always go the way we want it to, then we can quickly blame it on someone or something. We forget that our Lord is sitting in heaven directing our lives and that of the church unto His perfect end. So, as we stand at the very beginning of a new year, let us remind ourselves of the truth that is before us: Christ is Lord!

There are two virtues mentioned in the verse we consider that characterize our Lord and that give us great comfort. The first is: He is almighty! An earthly lord or king may be powerful and may exert much authority and sway over his people, but there is one thing he is not. He is not all mighty. As mighty as he may seem, his authority and his power can be challenged and taken away by another. How many times that has happened in the kingdoms of men. As much power and ability an earthly ruler may wield, he is never all mighty.

Well, the same is not true of our King, our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is all powerful. The heathen may rage, the kings of the earth may set themselves against God and His anointed to break away from their rule. These wicked people of the earth even imagine a vain thing, that they have successfully broken away from the sovereign rule of Christ over them. But they have not. They have not because they cannot! The unbelieving world around us imagines that it has set its own course in this world. In the year before us man will go his merry way and increase in his wickedness.

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We will be appalled once again as we observe what great lengths man will develop in his sin in this year to come. The wicked will increase in their wickedness, they will mock Christ, they will do what is right in their own eyes, all because of their foolish imagination! They think Christ does not see from His throne in heaven. They think they are in control and not Christ.

But Christ reigns, dear believer. He even now, in His power and might, directs the nations and the peoples of this earth. Does Christ even direct them in their way of foolishness and sin? Yes, He does! All in order that the world might become ripe for judgment! All of

these things take place in order that Christ might bring about His second coming. "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him someday!" Every man will give account to this Lord of heaven and earth.

In the year 2014 we need not fear the wicked, though he is loud and boastful, though he is filled with rage against God. Our Lord is almighty! He reigns over the wicked man with a rod of iron and will dash him in pieces.

There is one other virtue that gives us great comfort in the year to come. Christ is unchangeable in His might. The Lord is He which is and was and is to come almighty! That means that Christ is ever the same. There is great comfort in that for us, you know! When we look back over the year that now has disappeared, we see that there were so many things that happened to us and our loved ones. There has been so much development of sin in this world.

The world increases in sin so rapidly! To look to another year really can be frightening. What will become of me and my children and my brothers and sisters? What will become of my fellow members in the church in the year to come? It is frightening

when we really sit back and think about it! Everything is constantly changing. What curve ball am I going to get thrown at me in this year to come? What will I or my family have to endure? The future is unknown and so, so uncertain. But there is one thing we can be sure of in the year to come: Jesus is and was and is to come the same.

He is the same in His great love toward us. That love never changes! God has chosen us in Christ from eternity and we have been saved in Christ. Christ is not going to turn away from that love for us. Neither will Christ allow His chosen people to walk away from Him. We are held in His almighty hand. He loves us and He will love us in this year to come too. And remember, beloved saint, Christ is and was and is to come almighty too! That means His power and authority over all things will never diminish. He will direct all the affairs of 2014

for our good and our salvation. When we see the frightening events of our lives unfold in the year to come, we look at them by faith and not by sight. Not one event of our lives or of this world will slip by Christ and His rule. He has them under His control. Even when life

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that some are chosen to life eternal and others are rejected to death eternal. God is the divine Potter who makes some people as vessels of honor and others as vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.

Then, according to that same will and good pleasure of God, God cuts the nation of Israel out of the vine of His covenant and church and grafts in peoples from the nations of this world. No, God's decree of election still stands. There are still those believers in Israel that belong to the church, but the nation of Israel no longer is favored by God. The chaff is cast away, while the remnant of God's elect in Israel remain. But now God sovereignly grafts in the Gentiles. Why? Because so it seems good in God's sight!

Why does God find fault in the reprobate man, since God already decreed his destruction anyway, and man is powerless to thwart the will of God? God is not fair! He is not righteous and just! "Who are you, O man, that replies against God?" God is in the heavens. He does what pleases Him. And man has no right to sit in judgment upon God! Here is the truth: "How unsearchable are God's judgments! And his ways past finding out!" Do not overstep your bounds, O man! We do not understand and comprehend all the decrees of God nor the way He works them

out in His providence in perfect righteousness. Instead, let us marvel at God! Let us stand in awe and amazement before Him and give praise to His name.

The great truth of God's sovereignty is that which prompts the questions of verses 34, 35: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" Examine the questions of this doxology, you who believe. Who has known the mind of the Lord? God sits in the heavens, far out of the reach of man. He is the transcendent One, the incomprehensible One. In fact, we would not even know God existed except that He has chosen to reveal Himself to us. We must understand our place as man; we are but puny creatures in the sight of God. Isaiah states it this way in Isaiah 40:17, 18: all men together, all who are in this world, are less than the fine dust of the balance in comparison to God! Do we really think we can know the mind of God? Do we really think we can fully understand what God is doing?

Who is God's counselor? Did God sit down with man sometime in eternity, and did man help God in determining what He was going to do with this world? Did God need man to assist Him in His decision

for us what it is that causes such awe in the hearts of believers: “How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” That is why there is this expression of amazement of God.

God’s judgments are unsearchable. The term “judgment” is often times

used in Scripture to denote the condemnation and punishment of evil doers, but that is not the sense in which it is used here. It is true that we stand in awe at God’s judgment in that sense too, but the idea here in these verses is that of God’s decrees, that is, what God has purposed to do and accomplish in His eternal plan. It refers to the decisions He came to in His plan: the why and the how of God’s eternal thoughts. These are unsearchable. Man is not able to plumb the depths of the decrees of God by which He governs everything that takes place in this world.

In that connection, too, God’s ways are past finding out. The term “ways” used here in Romans 11:33 denotes the manner or way in which God works out what He has planned. In other words, in this phrase Paul makes reference to God’s providential control over all things: the actual working out of His decrees in time. The mode

of God’s operation, the manner in which He rules over all creatures, is past finding out. Man’s puny, finite mind cannot begin to understand what God does in this world. This is why we stand

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in awe at what God’s does. This is exactly what causes the feeling of dread and fear, the excitement and amazement, the admiration of God. How small and insignificant a creature is man in the sight of this God.

According to God’s eternal will and purpose for all things, He chose in the Old Testament a certain nation that He called His own: the nation of Israel. Out of all the nations of this world God chose only Israel. Why? Because this is what He willed or planned to do in eternity—sovereignly, freely. But then, as Paul points out at the beginning of Romans 9, not all the people of Israel were chosen by God either! They are not all Israel that are called Israel. God chose out of this nation a certain people unto Himself. He chose Jacob, and not Esau. Sovereignly God loved Jacob and hated Esau. God’s sovereign decree of election and reprobation was being fulfilled. Then Paul explains this sovereign decree in detail. It is not of man that wills, but only of God that shows mercy,

seems so chaotic, even when all the events of our lives seem to swirl around us, Christ is there and He holds these events of our lives in His hand. And they take place with perfect rhyme and reason. Christ never changes in all these things. He loves us and He controls all things always and ever the same.

The Meaning

It is for this reason He gives us His name: I am Alpha and Omega. That name gives us all the reason to be filled with hope in the year to come. Christ is Alpha and Omega. These two words are the names of two letters of the Greek alphabet. Alpha is comparable to our A and Omega is comparable to our Z. In other words these two Greek letters are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet, just like our A and Z are in the English alphabet. By using these two letters of the Greek alphabet as a name, Christ is saying in essence this of Himself—I am the first and the last. This is further explained by Him in our text when He attaches to this name the words, “the beginning and the ending.”

Since we have already found out that Christ the Lord is the Alpha and Omega, it is left to us to find the meaning of this name. What message is Christ conveying to us this new year

when He says to us: I am the Alpha and Omega? And what assurance can we derive from this name in the year to come?

There are several different ideas expressed in Scripture that ought to be applied to the thought given us in this name of Christ. The first is this: Christ is God! Christ is divine! This means that Christ is first, just as God is first! God is from eternity and to all eternity. We read of this in John 1:1, 2. Christ was with God and is God in the beginning of all things. And since all things are *to* God, that is, they find their end in God and His glory, so also is this true of Christ according to His divinity. God is not only first but last! So is Christ. That, then, the Scriptures ascribe to Christ. He is before all things, by Him all things consist, and to Him are all things! He is the first and the last according to His godhead. That truth first of all.

But there are two other truths concerning Christ that the Scriptures present that are really on the foreground in this verse. The first of these two truths is this: Christ is the first and the last in the counsel of God! Before time began, in eternity, God in His counsel willed or decreed Christ as the firstborn among many brethren. Christ is first, He is the beginning of all things. All things in history therefore center in Christ. He

was the reason all things were created. He was the reason we were chosen as God's elect people. He is first in the eternal counsel of God with respect to our salvation. This is why Christ has the preeminence. Christ is the firstborn of the church.

What practical significance does that have for you and me in the year 2014? This. Never—never—will God view His people apart from Jesus Christ this year. God has chosen us in Him and has saved us in Him. We are His always and ever. That we need to know when we sin in this year that is to come. Our sins at times can overwhelm us. When we are called to examine ourselves and find so much sin in us, we are apt to say: I cannot be a child of God! But we are! Christ is first and we are in Him. When the troubles of this life threaten to take away our joy and happiness; when circumstances of life threaten to rob us of our contentment and peace of heart; we must remember this—just as this day is the first of the year, so also is Christ first. And just as this year will end 365 days later, so Christ is the end of it. All things are for Christ, and if we be Christ's, then all things are for us too!

That brings us to the final idea expressed in this name. Christ is the beginning of our salvation and the end of it too! And it is really this idea that

stares us in the face in this passage of God's Word. Christ came in His first advent to bring us salvation. He has accomplished this on the cross and in His resurrection. He began the work of salvation at that time. And at the end of time, in His return, Christ will bring that salvation to its perfect end. He is the beginning of our salvation and He is the ending of it. And He is everything in between too. He that has begun a good work in us will be faithful to complete that work—which means once again that Christ will preserve us in the year to come. His promise to you and me is sure! He is coming, and He carries with Him the final work of the salvation of the church. When He comes He will dispel all night for us and usher us into that kingdom where God and the Lamb are the light of it. And the light that shall shine will be the perfection of that kingdom. All sin will be gone, and all our enemies will be destroyed. It will be a kingdom of peace and true joy and happiness! That kingdom is coming, people of God! It is coming again in 2014. Christ even now is establishing His kingdom all over this world—in the hearts of His elect people. And that kingdom will be brought to its completion soon enough!

The Hope

And that is what gives us

Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things!

The focus here is not on man—not in the least sense. It is wholly on God! How deep are His riches and wisdom and knowledge! They are past finding out!

Now we consider God and His glory—an important theme restored by the theology of the Reformation—in particular the branch known as Calvinism.

As we mentioned, these verses conclude the section of Romans that addresses the sovereignty of God in predestination. We cannot in our broadcast today begin to explain the glorious truth of God's eternal plan for all things, and His plan before time began according to which He chose some unto salvation while others He rejected unto everlasting perdition. I invite you on your own to do a thorough study of Romans 9-11. Then consider the doxology we have before us today.

Questions of Wonder

A few years ago my family and I visited Niagara Falls. For those of you who have done the same you know that, on the Canadian side, there is a place where you can stand that is only a few feet away from the Horseshoe Falls. I remember standing there and experiencing a thrill of wonder and dread mixed.

The power of those Falls was amazing! I knew that if I were to take but a few steps beyond that rail and into the water that was plummeting over the falls, there would be no resisting the power of that water. It filled my heart with awe. And certainly a part of that awe was the fear I had of those falls. How small and helpless they made me feel. But the child of God is awestruck not simply by the force of nature itself. We view these wonders of creation with believing hearts. When we are filled with this sense of dread or this amazing, exciting admiration, this is directed toward God, the Creator and Governor of these things. We stand in awesome wonder and exclaim of God, "How great Thou art!"

This feeling of awe, this feeling of wonder and amazement at what God has done, is what Paul is expressing in the words of this doxology before us. We need to capture that sense of awe and wonder at what is expressed in these verses before us.

That which causes the wonder of Paul in these verses is not God's powerful and glorious works in this creation. Paul here is considering what he has just taught us concerning God's sovereign decree of predestination—the deep truths of God's eternal counsel and will for all things. The Word of God here at the end of verse 33 expresses

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*January 26, 2014
No. 3708*

*God's Everlasting Glory
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

My turn for speaking on the Reformed Witness Hour has come to its close again. Next week Rev. Rodney Kleyn will once again take up his labors. It has been a blessing for me to share the Word of God with you.

I thought it fitting in this broadcast to consider the doxology found in Romans 11:33-36. These verses read: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Paul speaks God's praise in this doxology as a result of the deep truths he taught in chapters 9-11 of Romans. In these chapters the Holy Spirit teaches us through Paul the great wonder of God's sovereign predestination of some to eter-

nal glory and others to eternal condemnation. He ends this discourse with what we have before us today, "O, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! To Him be glory forever!"

Here is an expression of praise to God we do not hear very much anymore in the realm of modern Christianity. There is so much emphasis on man, and what man must do to make this world a better place, that the deep truths of God are forgotten. Forgotten is what God has sovereignly decreed in our salvation. Man today—within the church—has robbed God of His true glory in order to give the glory to man. God does not control all things. Man controls his own destiny in this world. God, so it is thought, does not choose man—man chooses God. Christ does not powerfully save through His death. Man saves by accepting Christ. God does not control all things. Man is in control. Oh that the doxology of these verses would truly be on the lips of all those who call themselves Christians in this world. God's is the glory! Of

the hope necessary to carry on again in the year to come. Our King, our Lord, is coming! He is directing everything that is taking place in our lives and in the church and in the world. He did that in the year gone by, and He will do it in the year to come!

He is the first of this year and He is the end of this year. He is in the beginning of time, and He will be here at the end of time, when the years will cease to exist for us.

We must look for Him with that hope too. Hope is a patient waiting for and longing after something that is to come. That is what must characterize us as we look for Christ's return. We must be anxious and yet patient. That is what motivates you and me in our homes and families in the year to come. That is what must give us the zeal to carry on the work of the church. That is what must motivate us in our individual lives. We may not wallow in our troubles! We may not look at life and become cast down about it! We must be zealous! Christ is coming! What reason for joy in the year to come.

We may not say: "Oh Lord, just take me out of this world! I just want to go to heaven!" Christ places you and me in this world for a reason! It would be wrong for us to sit and mope in the year to come and be miserable! That is not why God has you and me born into this world—to sit about and say how much we do not want to be here. We must rejoice in the year to come! We must approach this year with zeal! Christ is coming. And I represent His cause and His kingdom in this world! He is the beginning of this year and He is the end of it and He is everything in between! He will preserve my going out and my coming in! Praise His name! The hope that is mine gives me incentive to live and be fruitful in God's kingdom! God give us that hope in the year to come.

Christ is our King. Onward Christian soldiers—onward into this new year we go! We fight against all evil and stand for the right! And when Christ comes again we will be found standing in faithfulness to Him. Come Lord Jesus—come quickly!

||| *Our King,
our Lord,
is coming!* |||

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*January 12, 2014
No. 3706*

*By Faith Looking For a City
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma*

Dear Radio Friends,

Introduction

Abraham had moved from his home in Ur of the Chaldees. God had called him to leave his country, his relatives, and his father's house to travel to a land faraway—the land of Canaan. This was the promised land—the land where God would in the future continue His church specifically in the line of Abraham's children.

We find in the Genesis account that, once Abraham moved to the beautiful land of Canaan, he did not settle in one place in Canaan. He did not build himself a house and a city. He was a nomad who wandered from place to place. Perhaps that does not seem all that out of place, since there were other nomadic people who lived that way in the past. But the verses of Hebrews 11 we consider today reveal that there was a reason Abraham did this. We read in Hebrews 11:9-10, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is

God." Abraham viewed himself as a stranger and a pilgrim in the earth with no real abiding place. He looked for a heavenly city. And the reason Abraham did this was because he was a man of faith. Hebrews 11 calls our attention to the faith of Abraham.

We are going to consider Abraham's faith today. But not as this faith was an isolated virtue in Abraham's life alone. It is this same faith that must characterize every believer. It must characterize you and me too! It is this faith that makes us the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham. He is the father of all believers. Because this is true, this passage teaches us a sound truth about us.

Abraham's Faith

Abraham was a man of great faith. Faith is Abraham's earmark in Scripture. It is true that he is not the only man (or woman for that matter) to whose faith Scripture points. Neither is he the first believer. There have been believers in this world since the time of Adam and Eve. Obviously, from Hebrews 11,

ing to do with earning salvation. We are justified in the blood of Christ. He is the ground for our salvation. Be ye doers of the Word because this is the way you show thankfulness for salvation. Do those good works knowing that they are indeed the result, the fruit, of faith. Believers must walk in good works. They must be hearers but also doers of what they hear preached to them.

And when believers do the things required in the Word of God, they must remember what manner of people they are: sinners saved by grace; beautified with salvation. We walk in the consciousness that we are cleansed in the blood of our Savior. And we do not forget that.

Blessed by the Word

When we are doers of the Word and not just hearers, then we are blessed. This is how verse 25 ends: "this man shall be blessed in his deed." That word "blessed" is the same as Jesus uses in the beatitudes of Matthew 5. It literally means happy. The believer is not just happy that he is saved by grace through his faith. But he is happy in the deeds of faith. He

is blessed in life. He is so, not only on Sunday as he hears the Word, but also when that Word continues with him and he does it. And is that not the idea, people of God? What good is it when we sit in church on Sunday and then go out during the week and ignore what we heard? Where is the joy in that? Why even sit in church and hear? But when we hear God's Word and use it to direct us in our walk of life in this world, that is joy.

In other words, what James says is correct; that man is blessed *in his deeds*. Jesus says it this way in Luke 11:28, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." The deeds we do are evidence to us of our faith. They are the fruit of faith. When we walk in sin and ignore what we hear in the preaching, where is our faith? Sin causes heartache and misery. Sin causes agony of heart and soul. The believer who does the Word of God is happy in the deeds that he performs.

That, then, is the incentive we receive in this Word of God. Let us not deceive ourselves. Do not walk away from the mirror of God's Word and forget what that Word teaches us to do in life. Be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

tionship to their government. They do not apply it to finances, or to work, or to friendships, or to entertainment, or to the way they deal with others, or to their place in the church. They use their Bibles on Sunday, and the rest of the week the Bible sits on a shelf gathering dust. They hear it and forget it. They come to church willingly enough, but do it as a matter of custom or habit. The preaching is merely a matter of theology to them, but not a matter of practical life.

This type of a hearer is not merely a lazy hearer, but he is not listening in faith. The call of the gospel is: believe! When one hears the gospel with the ears of faith, then the result is good works! It is hearing that perfect law of liberty and going out and using one's liberty to walk in God's precepts. It is living in connection with Christ, not just when we are sitting in church on Sundays but through the whole week.

One who does not hear in faith, James says, is just like that man who wakes up in the morning and looks at himself in a mirror and then walks away and forgets that his teeth are covered with a film, that he has bed head, that his sleepers are stuck in the corner of his eyes. He becomes busy with his day smiling at people with his dirty teeth, maintaining eye contact with people with his sleepers,

and then walking away with matted hair. And all the while he deceives himself into thinking that he is an impressive picture of cleanliness. Such hearers of God's Word go out of church forgetting to evaluate themselves spiritually. They forget what manner of men or women they are. They forget that only when they reflect the virtues of Jesus Christ, the fruits of the Spirit, are they truly beautiful. Only when they walk in God's commandments are they truly holy. But they forget that, and they walk in the ways of sin, ignoring what they heard in the preaching. And they think they are beautiful! They deceive themselves into thinking that they are impressive.

Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only! That is the command we receive here in God's Word. Do the Word! Keep the commandments of God. The commands teach us to love God and the neighbor. Do them. Jesus says, "If you love me, keep my commandments." Do not just listen to them on Sunday, but go out in the week that lies ahead and do them. Walk in faith. Really, that is what this command of our text comes down to. Believe, and then walk in that faith. Faith is not dead. Faith produces good works—works that stand in conformity to the law of God.

Doing that Word has noth-

there are many who have gone before us that are examples of faith. Hebrews 11 presents us with a cloud of witnesses who testified boldly of their faith in Christ. But Abraham is an outstanding figure of faith in Scripture. Out of the 40 verses in this chapter, there are twelve devoted to the faith of Abraham. Likewise, we learn of his faith in Romans 4, Galatians 3, James 2, and other chapters of the Bible. This is why Abraham is referred to as the father of all believers. We will return to that in a little while. But at this point, we need to define this faith of Abraham.

Hebrews 11 looks at faith from a particular point of view. Verse 1 explains that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But that certainly is not a complete definition of the concept of faith. A definition of faith begins with what Paul teaches us in Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Faith is a gift of God. It is not a work of man. It is not something that a man must muster up from within himself before God will save him. It is a work of God—a gift or blessing of salvation that God works in the hearts of His elect people by the Spirit of Christ.

When the Spirit enters the heart of one of God's people, that person is regenerated, that is, given life out of death. At that moment that elect sinner is grafted by the Spirit into Jesus Christ. That grafting, that binding us together with Christ, is the power unto faith. Such a work of faith does not lie dormant in a person, however. It is not a work of Christ that leaves you and me unaffected. In other words, faith is active in us. It affects our souls.

What is the activity we call faith? Knowledge! We are given to know God and Jesus Christ. This knowledge of faith is not the same knowledge that an unbeliever has of God. Oh, it is true that all knowledge is intellectual. All knowledge affects our understanding. The unbeliever can know exactly the same kind of facts about God and Jesus Christ as the believer can. Maybe even more! But the knowledge we have of God is one that is activated by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit takes up His seat in our heart, then what we know of God and of man and his sin and of salvation in Jesus Christ is a true knowledge of God. It is a knowledge by which we love God, and fear God, and seek God, and, as a result, place our confidence in God.

*Faith is a gift of God.
It is not a work of man.*

That was the faith of Abraham. He knew God. He knew that God was the almighty, sovereign Creator who demands of His creatures that they obey Him. He knew of the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. He knew of man's guilt before God. He knew of his need for a Messiah. But he also knew of God's faithfulness. He knew of God's friendship and favor. He knew God was unchanging in His love and mercy toward him. God had promised him His blessing. Abraham experienced that blessing of God too. And Abraham was confident that God would give to him everything that He had promised.

This faith of Abraham characterized, and *still* characterizes, all of Abraham's children. Does this mean that all of Abraham's natural children were believers? Does this mean that God somehow passes on Abraham's faith via genetics? If you were a Hebrew in the Old Testament you were automatically a believer? Does this mean that the Jews today who are the natural seed or children of Abraham can only be believers? After all, God did say to Abraham: "I will establish my covenant with you *and your children after you in your generations.*" And was it not true that only the Hebrews in the Old Testament were saved, with the exception of a few others?

It is true that in the Old Testament times the children of Abraham were found among the natural descendants of Abraham. God limited the scope of His church for many centuries to the Jewish people. But this certainly did not make every Jew a believer! Nor were the Jews, that is, the natural descendants of Abraham, his true children! The writer to the Hebrews, in the last several verses of chapter 3, points out that many of the nation of Israel (Abraham's children) did not enter the land of Canaan because of unbelief. Their carcasses fell in the wilderness enroute to Canaan. Jesus pointed out plainly to the Pharisees in John 8:39: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." Jesus point blank told these men, who were the natural descendants of Abraham and who even boasted of being the spiritual elite of Israel, "You are not the children of Abraham! You do not do the works of faith!" Paul states the truth plainly in Romans 2:28, 29: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

So, the natural descendants of Abraham are not Abraham's children to which the Bible

and sends His Spirit into our hearts to make us holy.

Now, there are two kinds of hearers of that Word. There are two types of people who look into that mirror of God's Word and law. One is a hearer who takes a look at himself in the mirror and his evaluation is:

*We must not only
hear the Word,
we must also do it.*

"Not the greatest, but it could be worse!" but after he walks away from the mirror he begins to think of himself as the handsomest man in the world. He deceives himself, James says. He needs cleansing, but he hears the Word of God, hears the commandments, and walks away satisfied with who he is. This is the forgetful hearer. The other hearer of God's Word is one who looks into that perfect law of liberty, truly knows what he looks like, walks away continuing to remember what he looks like, and then applies the Word of God to his life in this world. He hears the Word preached, and not only hears it but is quick to apply it to his life in this world, so that he walks in that Word. He does the Word and does not merely hear it! And that Word continues all through the week to be before his mind's eye. That is the analogy made here in our text. That is the comparison James uses to get his point across.

Doing the Word

The point is: we must not only hear the Word, we must also do it. That is the command we receive here: be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only. James brings this up because there are many who sit beneath the preaching and

are forgetful hearers. Forgetful in this sense: they hear the preaching and even agree with it, but the moment Sunday is over, they forget the Word. They do not carry it with them into their lives. It never seems to direct them or change them in the ways needed. The Word preached may address how we are called to love our neighbor. It may address the commandments. It may explain and forbid rebellion, adultery, greed, murder, lying, and cheating. The church may be filled with hearers. Sometimes enthusiastic hearers. But though they hear, they straightway leave the church and forget about what they heard when in the world. They do not apply it to their lives in their parenting, or to their relationship with mother and father. They do not glean from the preaching the principles of God's Word that ought to direct them in their dating life, or in their marriage, or in their relationship to their employer or employees, or in their rela-

that life we bring forth fruits of righteousness before God. As a result of the work of faith within us, we bring forth good works. Such is the word that we are commanded to hear and do.

There is one more truth about that “Word” spoken of here in these several verses: it is the Word preached. “Be ye doers of the Word, and not *hearers* only.” It is a Word that we are called to hear. The emphasis of our text is upon the doing of God’s Word, but in order to do it we must first hear it. Neither does James neglect to remind his readers that we must be those who hear the Word of God. In other words, God’s people must come under the preaching of the Word. They may not merely sit in their homes and read the Bible for themselves or with their families. That is necessary too. That is the duty of every father in his home. But believers must come under the preaching of the gospel. All of God’s children are required by God’s Word to sit under the preaching of God’s Word and hear it proclaimed to them.

But the instruction of God to us in the verses goes beyond mere hearing. It has to do with the hearing *and the doing* of that Word preached. In order for us to understand, an analogy or comparison is drawn in this passage. The Word of God, the perfect law of liberty, is a mirror.

When a person comes to church and hears that Word of God proclaimed, he is made to look into that mirror. He is made to see himself. He is made to see himself as he really is. God’s law does that. It exposes us for who we really are. Out of the law of God is the knowledge of our sin. In other words, it is like looking into a mirror when we first get out of bed in the morning. Our hair is messed, probably a bit greasy. Our mouth tastes like an army just set up camp in it. Our teeth have a film. Our skin is greasy, or, if a woman, our makeup is smeared. There may be sleepers in the eyes. We do not like anyone seeing us when we first get up because we need to clean up first.

Well, that is what it is like to look into the perfect law of liberty. That is what it is like oftentimes when we hear God’s Word and the law preached to us. We realize that we are not so pretty. We realize our sin. We realize that by nature we are prone to hate God and the neighbor. The filth of sin yet cleaves to us. We need to be cleansed. We need to be beautified. That beauty comes only through the cross of Christ. He alone turns our guilt into righteousness. He alone makes us, who are worthy of death, innocent in the sight of God. Further, He makes us, who are filthy in sin, holy in the sight of God. He cleanses us through His death on the cross

refers. The true children of Abraham are in every age those who believe! Abraham’s seed consists only of believers—all believers. This was true in the Old Testament and it is still true today. Though believers were for a long time found only among the natural descendants of Abraham, this does not mean that every natural-born child of Abraham was one of his spiritual children. This ought to be clear if we are going to apply the Word of God before us. The natural-born children of Abraham are not the seed or the children to which the Bible refers when it speaks of Abraham’s children.

So, here is the question: are you a believer? Is the faith of Abraham we have described yours? Do you believe? Do you know God, your sin, and your salvation in Jesus Christ? Do you fear God, love Him, and seek to live for Him? Are you confident that God will do what He promises in His Word? Do you recognize Him as the sovereign Creator who holds the times and the seasons, as well as your life, in His hand? Do you find Him a faithful Father who for Christ’s sake has forgiven you of sin and now dwells with you in fellowship and love? If this is true, you are one of Abraham’s children, as I believe I am! Abraham is our

father, people of God. He is the father of all believers! The faith of Abraham that is revealed in the passage before us now is *our* faith. This is how the blessing of Abraham becomes ours, namely, through faith. This is the means by which Abraham becomes the father of many nations. This is how all the families of the earth are united together again after the division of the peoples and nations at the time of Babel.

Oh, the nations of the earth will always be divided by strife, hatred, and pride. But from among those nations God gathers to Himself a church agreeing in faith! It is the faith of our father Abraham. In light of that we are able to take what is said of Abraham in this verses of Hebrews 11 and make specific application of it to ourselves, though we live centuries after Abraham did.

Its Object

That being established, let us look back at the faith of Abraham from the point of view of the Word of God before us. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Abraham hoped for something. He believed that God was going to fulfill something. In other words, Abraham’s faith had something as its object. We

||| *Abraham’s seed consists
only of believers—
all believers.* |||

learn of the object of the faith of Abraham in our text. Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, we are told in verse 9. And at the end of that verse, he dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. The object of Abraham's faith was God's promise. It was this promise that he saw afar off, and was persuaded of it, and embraced it, and confessed it. What promise is that? That God would give to him and his children the land of Canaan as a possession. And that his children would be as the dust of the earth that no man can number.

Yet, to understand this promise of God to Abraham we must examine it in light of Abraham's life and what God was performing in him. You see, this promise of God was only one among several promises. But all these promises centered in one truth. They all find their source and fulfillment in God's covenant. God's covenant is the bond of friendship and favor that He establishes with His people in Christ.

In that covenant, God becomes the God, the sovereign Friend, of His people, and His people become those who belong to and are protected by God. God enters into the closest relationship of love with

His people for Christ's sake. He is a father, His people are His children. He is the husband, and His people are His bride. In this love and friendship, God makes different promises to His people. One such promise to Abraham was to give to him and his children the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession.

God took Abraham and showed to him the entire land of Canaan. To you and to your seed I will give this land, He told Abraham. It will be your possession. That is a promise!

And Abraham believed God because he knew God. He knew who God was and that God was both able and willing to give to him what He promised. By faith Abraham dwelt in that land of Canaan, always clinging to that promise! He died clinging to that promise—never seeing that promise fulfilled. But he believed God.

But, you know what? That earthly land of Canaan was not the real object of Abraham's faith. It was only a picture to Abraham of the place of his true desires. We read in Hebrews 11:10, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." It is obvious that the real promise of God was this: someday you and your chil-

That earthly land of Canaan was not the real object of Abraham's faith.

are forced to conform ourselves. The law of God is become to the believer the very center of his existence. He loves the law! He desires to do God's will. All this because Christ has fulfilled or perfected that law within us. It is the perfect law of God.

And for that reason too, it is the law of liberty! You see, when Christ conquered sin and Satan at the cross, He gained for you and me our liberty, our freedom. Christ set us free from the bondage of

sin. When we were lost in sin, we hated the law of God and refused to walk in obedience to it. We were rebels who had no ability in us to walk in God's precepts. But through the power work of our salvation we have been set free from the slavery of sin. This does not mean, however, that we are free to do what we want to do. It means that we are free to do the will of God again. The law is the law of liberty. It is the law of liberty in another sense too. It guards our liberty! It protects our freedom! (Our country has been free and still is to a large extent. That freedom is protected by the laws of our land. Freedom is not without law.)

So, we are called to hear and do the perfect law of liberty. But let us not forget that this law

of liberty is, in fact, the Word we hear! It is the Word. And although the law of God may be a part of that Word, it is not the all of it. It is obvious from what we have already described that the Word used here is in fact Scripture—Scripture that indeed contains the law of God but at the same time contains for us the word of the gospel. The law can never be viewed apart from the gospel, fellow saint!

Never! The law indeed leads us to a knowledge of our sin. When we look into the mirror of God's Word, the first thing we are able to see is that by the deeds of the law no man can be justified. We cannot be righteous before God on the basis of our good works. The works of the law cannot merit anything in the sight of God. On the contrary, the law reveals that we are guilty before God and stand in need of the righteous blood of Jesus Christ. That is what Scripture teaches us. And that too is the word we must hear.

But along with that word of the gospel we also learn that through the work of Christ on the cross we have been delivered from sin. He sends forth His Spirit to dwell in our hearts, and that Spirit works in us faith. Faith binds us to Christ in order that the life of Christ flows forth into us. And by means of

The law can never be viewed apart from the gospel.

law indeed leads us to a knowledge of our sin. When

here by the Word. He uses that term “word” twice, both in verse 22 and verse 23. Now, it would not be all that necessary to explain this simple term if James did not further define it for us in verse 25. We would simply say that the Word refers to Scripture and leave it at that. But when James speaks of this Word as “the perfect law of liberty,” it automatically requires our attention. Obviously, the Word referred to here by James requires an understanding of the content of the Word of God. When we hear the *word* we hear the perfect law of liberty.

The law that James refers to is the moral law, that is, the law of the ten commandments. Although the whole of the law is indeed the Word that we hear, James em-

phasizes the second table of that law, the table dealing with how

we are to behave ourselves toward our neighbor. Jesus summarizes the law in these words, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” That summary includes the last six commands of the ten: honor parents, no stealing, no adultery, no murder, no lying, and no coveting. That is the law—and that is “the word” that we must hear and do: we must abide by the ten commandments especially as these have

to do with our life in relation to the neighbor.

But there is more to this law than merely a set of objective commands that God gives to His people. This law is a perfect law, and it is a law of liberty. These are the two ways James describes the law of God.

These laws are *perfect*. This word does not mean that the laws of God are flawless and without error, even though that is very true. But it refers to the fact that these laws that God gives us are complete. They express for you and me the complete will of God for our lives. These laws are not useless and outdated for the modern man. These laws are vital and dynamic for the life of God’s people today too. They did not disappear with the coming

of salvation in Christ. Christ did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. That is what the word

“perfect” here in our text means too. God’s law is perfect, that is, it is fulfilled or brought to its completion in the very work of Jesus Christ on the cross! Christ established the law. By means of His work on the cross the laws of God have become inscribed on the fleshy tables of our hearts. We carry God’s law within us. The ten commandments are not external codes to which we

*The law of God
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dren (believers) will enter into a city that I have prepared for you in heaven. This earthly land of Canaan is only a token, a type, a picture of My real promise of the heavenly land of Canaan! You and your spiritual children will come to dwell with Me in a better country—a perfect country, that is, a heavenly.

Abraham in faith saw this promise of God, was persuaded of it, embraced it, and confessed it! God would fulfill it! And for that reason Abraham looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Abraham looked for his possession in heaven. The earthly land of Canaan was only a temporary place to live. Abraham need only sojourn there until such time as he would receive the city God prepared for him in heaven. That is what Abraham was given by faith to see when he looked at the land of Canaan. The promise of God to him was not wrapped up in the earthly. God’s promise was highly spiritual. And Abraham in faith looked beyond the earthly.

That is the idea of verse 10 here. A city is a permanent place. When a person builds a city, he builds a place of permanent abode. With the building of a city, foundations are poured, and on them houses and stores and shops are built. A person moves into one of the houses and finds his job in that city. He puts

down roots. He moves in to stay with his family. He identifies himself with that city.

Where do you live? Pittsburgh—that is the place of *my* abode. Well, for the believer, the place of his abode is heaven. He identifies himself with heaven. Where is your home? My home is heaven. That is where my roots are. That is where I will live for an eternity. That is my city—the city that God has prepared for me. This world is not my true home. I am only sojourning here. I seek heaven. All else is but a passing phase in my life. That was what Abraham hoped for. And he knew he was going to receive that inheritance too.

He was an heir to that promise. God would give it to him. As his Father, God would give him the possession of heaven. But how could Abraham believe that? He knew that certainly he did not deserve to go to heaven. He was a sinner. He had fallen in Adam and Eve. He deserved only God’s wrath and condemnation. The permanent home he deserved was hell—not heaven! How could Abraham look for a city called heaven? Because of the one central promise of the covenant—a promise Abraham received and clung to. The promise of a Messiah.

Abraham believed that he was an heir to the heavenly land of Canaan because of the salvation that was his in the

coming Messiah. Abraham believed that and clung to it and was persuaded that God is faithful to fulfill *that* promise. This is why Paul could write in II Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” That promise of a permanent place in heaven is given not only to Abraham, fellow believers. It is given to you and me too! In faith we look for the same city that Abraham looked for! Canaan is a picture to you and me too of that heavenly land of Canaan. We are persuaded that this city is ours! God has prepared it for us! That is the place of our desires! Why? Because we are characterized by the same faith as Abraham.

Its Result

This desire of Abraham caused him to live the way that he did. Abraham was not merely a nomad—a man who enjoyed the nomadic life. He knew what it was like to live in a city. He came from one. But Abraham while in Canaan lived in tabernacles, that is, tents, with his sons. He had no abiding place in the earthly land of Canaan. By faith he looked for a permanent abode only in heaven! So he purposely lived in tents with

Isaac and Jacob. And Abraham wandered here and there in the land. He identified with no city there. Neither did he build a city and lay down foundations. Such also ought to be our life in this world. I know we live in houses and in cities, and that is perfectly fine. But how much do we place our stock in this earthly realm? How far down have we dug our roots here? How much of our lives is devoted to the earthly rather than the heavenly? By faith we must long for, wait for, hope for those things not seen.

Then too, Abraham lived in Canaan as in a strange country. He lived as a pilgrim and stranger in this world. Such too is our calling in this world. This world is not my home. I’m only passing through! The faces of the unbelievers are not the faces of friends. They are strangers. I do not fit here with them. Their goals and aspirations in life are so different from mine. I am a stranger here, dependent on God’s grace.

Why is all of this true of us? Because we live by faith and not by sight! Faith looks for and hopes for those things not visible to the eye. Abraham is our father. His faith is our faith. May we live in that faith and confess that we are pilgrims and strangers in this world.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

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Not Just Hearers, But Doers
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Dear radio friends,

Introduction

Faith without works is dead, being alone. Faith is not faith unless it produces good works in a person’s life. This is the emphasis of James, the brother of Christ, in the letter he writes to the scattered believers. As such, this letter of James perfectly complements Paul’s epistles. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8, 9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” James writes: “Faith without works is dead.”

James does not claim that good works in any way merit salvation, but he does state boldly that good works are a result of salvation. They are the fruit of faith. If faith is found in a person, then good works will also be evident in his life.

It is on this that the instruction of the Word of God we consider today is based. That Word is found in James 1:22-25: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is

like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

When a person has faith, then he will not only be a hearer of the Word of God preached, but he will also be a doer of that Word. As such, the instruction given us by James here is very practical in nature. It does not leave the reader with any doubts. James is very clear and to the point: if all we do is come to church on Sunday and hear the Word and then leave without doing the Word, we are fools and the truth is not in us.

Hearing the Word

The admonition before us in these verses is that every believer must be a hearer and a doer of the Word. In order to understand this command, however, we need first of all to understand what James means