

* **Youth, Remember!**
Ecclesiastes 12:1

* **Keeping the Lord's Day Holy**
Hebrews 10:24, 25

* **Not Weary in Well-doing**
Galatians 6:9

* **Spiritual Lethargy**
Song of Solomon 5:1-8

* **Grace for Today**
Matthew 6:34

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we all our God.” The point being, thanksgiving must be now, or it is not at all. You do not plan your thanksgiving. You do not say, “Well, when we get to this point, we’ll be thankful.” Thanksgiving is now, for today’s mercies. Let His mercies for you this day press out of your hearts praise to Him.

Today, you feel afraid and alone? Listen, listen to His mercies: “Fear not, for I am with you. Oh, be not dismayed. I am your God, and I will strengthen you.”

You say, “But I am too weak”? Listen to Him: “My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in your weakness.”

You say, “I’m facing too much”? Listen: “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

You say, “I don’t know which way to go”? Listen: “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that thou shalt go; I will counsel thee with Mine own eye.”

You say, “I’m dying, I’m

getting old, I have problems”? Listen: “He will save to the uttermost all who come to Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them. He will not fail you, nor will He forsake you.”

So, what is the one and only response that the Lord seeks from you and me at every moment, in every day, and in every way? What is the response? Thanks, Lord! Thanks for mercies and grace sufficient for today. I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon the name of the Lord.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for Thy wonderful Word. We pray that it may be written upon our hearts this day by the Holy Spirit, that we may flee all anxiety in life in such a way that gives Thee praise and honor, thanking Thee moment by moment for Thy unfailing mercies that Thou hast shown to us. We pray, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

September 1, 2013

No. 3687

Youth, Remember

Rev. Carl Haak

Dear radio friends,

The Reformed Witness Hour brings you a message today from a very familiar verse in the Bible: Ecclesiastes 12:1. We read, “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.” We bring this verse of Scripture especially in remembrance of the beginning of school at this time of year, when many children and young people return to a regular course of study in their schools. We find it to be a very fit word, directed especially towards young people, and their calling in this coming year to remember their Creator in their education.

It is taken from the book of Ecclesiastes. The book of Ecclesiastes is the book in the Bible that gives us the proper view of this present life. We may call it the world and life view of the Christian. Those young people who are in college know that many Christian colleges as well as secular are concerned to teach a world and life view: what is life, what is my place in this present world, and what am I to do as a Christian? What is my

world and life view? The book of Ecclesiastes provides the world and life view of the child of God, the Christian.

Solomon, in the book, if you are acquainted with it (and I would encourage you to read the book this week), shows the vanity (and that is a prominent word in the book) or emptiness of life as far as fallen man is concerned. All the pursuits common to fallen men are vain and empty. They add up to nothing and bring only further grief and suffering. In the book you will see that the writer gives himself for a while to pursue the goals of materialism, thinking that life really is what you have. And he discovers and sees very clearly that this, too, is vanity and vexation of spirit. Or he pursues pleasure, laughter, and good times, and discovers that this too, apart from the living God, is but emptiness and vanity. He pursues what we might call humanism, a life of doing good or a life of learning. Again his conclusion is that these things too, apart from God, are empty and vexation of spirit, that apart from God life is an empty thing, filled with misery, and ending

in despair and destruction. He comes to a conclusion at the end of the book (chapter 12:13, 14), that there is but one proper view of life. Because God is God and we are created to know Him, there can be only one purpose for man. There is only one thing that is fulfilling. There is only one thing that is worth it.

Let us listen to his conclusion: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." That is, the Bible teaches us here, and throughout, that the whole purpose of life is simply to fear God, to stand in loving reverence and in holy awe, through Jesus Christ, of the great God of our salvation revealed in the Scriptures; to know Him in the face of Jesus Christ His Son; to be emptied of ourselves; to know our sins and our unworthiness; and to know His amazing grace in order that we might extol and honor Him. Fear God and keep His commandments. That will certainly be the result. The one who has been brought into a loving awe of the true and living God will, by God's grace, live a life of principled obedience. His life will be conformed more and more after the pattern of God's good and holy commandments.

The book of Ecclesiastes was written for young people. The Holy Spirit, through Solomon, has His eye especially upon youth. In the last part of Ecclesiastes, chapters 11 and 12, Solomon wished to remove the rose-colored glasses from the eyes of youth. You must not read those chapters thinking that Solomon is some disgruntled old man. Rather, Solomon wants young Christians to be under no illusions with respect to this present life. He says in 11:9 that youth is a blessing, that it is a very good thing. It is something to be enjoyed. He is not suspicious of youth. But he says that their joy must be tempered with the reminder that "God will bring thee into judgment." The idea is that your adult life is going to reveal the quality of your youth. Do not let your youth be days of vanity and emptiness. May God deliver you from this thought, that you can become serious when you get old, that spiritual things are reserved for tomorrow and now you can do exactly what you want. You can live your own life. If that is the youth that you have, it is empty. It is vain.

The Bible is teaching us that our adult life is going to be the reflection of our youth. Therefore, our youth must be spent in seri-

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tomorrow's burdens. Tomorrow's burdens are something God does not want you to carry today. But today He promises—and you will find Him faithful—He promises grace for today—every day, and every hour. At the end of every day, let your thought at the close of the day be: "Thanks, Lord, for grace sufficient for today."

Today's mercies are tailor-made for today's troubles—tailor-made to carry today's troubles. We read from Lamentations 3:22, 23: "Thy compassions fail not. The Lord's mercies are new each morning; great is Thy faithfulness." Or again, the hymn that I referred to: "Every day the Lord Himself is near me, with a special mercy for each hour."

We might ask, Why does the Lord do it that way? Why does He give us grace only for the day? He does it so that we are kept near to Him in dependence. There is a special mercy measured of God in love and wisdom, for you, for every moment and for every hour and for every day.

Understand this and live this. How many times do we not come to the end of our resources and say, "That's it. I'm done. No more." And then we roll on

us the stone of tomorrow and we say, "Now I'm really done. Not only am I exhausted, but tomorrow has more problems! It's impossible."

Beloved, God does not ask you to carry tomorrow's load with today's strength. What you need today is not tomorrow's grace. For you will receive fresh and sufficient grace tomorrow for tomorrow's needs. You need only today's grace. And God says, "I will give you that grace."

Who can ever say that God failed him? Who can ever say that God did not give him grace sufficient for the need that he had at that moment?

Thank Him right now for the wonder of today's mercy for today's troubles.

In our church, I have been emphasizing to our children in grades 4-7 that faith is always now. Faith is never something that you plan for the future. That courage to do the right thing, to live a godly life, is right now. It is never something you plan for the future.

So also thanks. Thanks to God is always now, right now. Present mercies are surrounding us. Amazing faithfulness holds us right now. How does the hymn have it? "Now thank

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you to carry tomorrow's load with today's strength. What you need today is not tomorrow's grace. For

tomorrow. God will give them. Manna that was hoarded by Israel when they took enough for two days—that manna rotted. Unseen, prepared mercies will be given to you tomorrow. Thank Him today for what He has given you.

I cannot express this too strongly—for children, for teenagers, for college students, for parents, for women, for middle-aged couples, for old people. We all want today to have tomorrow's strength. At the end of the day our gauge reads "empty." The Lord brings us through the day. We fall into bed exhausted. The Lord was faithful and He kept us throughout the day. We fall into the bed and what do we say? We say, "What about tomorrow?" And the Lord says, "No!" You must learn to say, "Thanks, Lord, for grace sufficient today."

You want the secret of a thankful life? You say, "Lord, open my heart to thank Thee. I'm so dull, so anxious, so weighed down in my soul." You pray, "Lord, give me to see Thy mercies for today."

That is it. Do you get that? If we pass over today, and if we peer into tomorrow and become desperate, then either we will be seized with anxiety or we will develop the strategy of telling ourselves that we are sufficient for tomorrow's troubles. But,

either way, we will not give Him thanks. We will be silent. There will not be a whimper of praise. We will say, "Thank Him? How can I thank Him when all those things loom upon me tomorrow?"

Let me tell you, then, what the Lord's words mean. The Lord is not saying, "There's no use worrying because it's not going to change anything. Tomorrow will take thought for the things of itself." No, He is not referring to fate. The Lord is not saying that you should not make preparations for tomorrow's needs. A farmer will have nothing in his silo if he does not plan ahead. Young people, everything worth doing requires forethought and planning and preparation. Get ready.

But the Lord means this: Don't bring the troubles and the fears of carrying out your preparations for tomorrow into today. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Each day will be given sufficient grace for that day. He means that each day your sovereign, heavenly Father, who is kind and wise beyond all measure, gives what He deems best—the trouble and the sufficient grace. God determines each day the limit of the troubles of that day. They will not go beyond that day. And God determines the grace that is sufficient for that day. God does not give mercies today for bearing

ous thought as to our purpose in this life, as to our relationship to God, as to our place to serve Him in this life. Youth is not a time for daydreaming. It is not a time for sloughing off. It is not a time for simply following the idols of this present world. It is not a time to drift along without a purpose or without a goal. Rather, says the Word of God, remember in the days of your youth your Creator. It is of utmost importance for Christian youth to be focused, in the days of their youth, upon their God.

Now, notice. Solomon's words are, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Notice that he says not simply "Remember thy God, thy Redeemer, thy Savior." But he says, "Creator." What is the idea of remembering our Creator God? The idea is this: that in the days of our youth, as always but especially in the days of our youth, we must remember that we have our existence from God; that, as receiving our existence from God, we stand responsible to Him; and that, renewed in Jesus Christ, we exist and live for but one purpose: to serve God.

The truth of creation, of course, displays the power and the purpose of God. By the word of the Lord, we read in Psalm 33, were the heavens made and all the hosts of them. By the breath of His mouth God's mighty

power is shown, in that He spoke and it was, He commanded and it stood fast. Creation not only shows the awesome power of God to create by His own power things that were not as though they were, but it also reveals His purpose. We read in Revelation 4:11 that the redeemed hosts in heaven sing, "For thy pleasure they are and were created." All things were created for a purpose. God, of course, does everything for only one purpose: His own glory. Creation is for the purpose of God's pleasure. Remember now your Creator. Remember that, as a child of God redeemed in Christ, you have been given life for one purpose: that you might live your life to the pleasure of God. Remember that. You have one purpose in life: to serve your God.

Missing that purpose, your life is vain, no matter what you might succeed in, no matter the beauty that you might gain by physical exercise and diet, no matter the powers of intellect you may bring to your mind and money to your wallet. Apart from serving God, you miss the whole purpose of your existence. Your life is empty. But in knowing God, the God who has not only given you existence by His power, but has by His grace redeemed you for the purpose that you might serve and know and love Him, your life has meaning.

This, of course, is very important. It means that without believing the truth of creation, man is doomed to folly. Man cannot know himself. Man does not know and cannot know why he exists. The truth of creation is not an appendix to the Christian faith. It is not something negotiable. The truth of creation in six twenty-four hour days is the Christian faith. To deny it is to deny the Christian faith.

The truth of creation declares that we are not independent. We are not self-existent. We may not be self-serving. We were created by the mighty power of God and are, therefore, dependent upon Him. God declares to you as a young person that our universe was not hurled into being by a big bang, that life did not develop from a pool of slime, that you are not a product of chance and mutation, that you are not simply a genetic code that miraculously somehow fell into being through ages and millions of years. The truth of creation declares to you that God made you. God determined your purpose. And God alone can satisfy you.

Remember your Creator. Remember not simply *creation*, but your *Creator*. Remember the One who powerfully, gloriously, made all things, and made you His own in Christ, so that now you owe your existence to Him, and the sole purpose of your life

is to honor and to know Him. Remember that in every class you take, whether that is at the college level or high school or whatever level of education it may be. Remember your Creator.

We must remember Him because, you see, we are always prone to forget. And when we forget our Creator, the problem is not mental but spiritual. It is not a learning disorder that we have but it is the old man of Adam. We do not, naturally, like to remember God—that is, according to our own nature. It is easy for us as children of God to forget our God and to forget our Creator, to forget that we owe all things to Him and to forget that we are on earth to serve Him. That is a very easy thing for us to forget. Not only is it true to our nature that we forget that, but we forget it through the many distractions of life. This is the strategy of the devil. He wants us to be busy with the things of this world. Or He wants us to be busy with entertainment or pleasure, with self, with all kinds of things. So there is the battle for the mind, the battle for the heart, and the battle for the soul. Upon what is it focused? Remember your Creator, remember the living God, and remember to live in sweet communion with Him, for, apart from Him, all is vanity.

This means that we must

Then in verses 31 and 32 we read that the Lord says anxiety is characteristic of an unbelieving world. Therefore, He says, “Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.” The Lord is saying that anxiety is the mark of the child of this world, and it would put you on the level of the world. Anxiety over earthly things shows that we are too close to the world and too far from God. It says that we do not think that our Father knows our needs or that He has a loving heart.

And then in verse 34 the Lord comes to His last argument against anxiety: “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

There is the heart of it. Our anxiety is over tomorrow. What will happen? We are muzzled in giving thanksgiving to God for His mercies today because of the troubles we see ahead tomorrow. Tomorrow’s troubles blot out today’s mercies. We bring tomorrow’s troubles forward into today in the form of anxiety. And we ignore the

present mercies that He has given to us today. We say, “I can’t be thankful today.” Why? Because the Lord has not given to you a great grace? No, He has. But what about tomorrow? The Lord says, “Don’t do that.” Believe God will be God tomorrow. Thank Him today for today’s mercies. His mercies are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness! Thank Him for today’s mercy and for today’s needs being supplied. That is thanksgiving.

An old Swedish hymn explains it: “He whose heart is kind beyond all measure, gives unto each day as He deems best—Lovingly it’s part of pain and pleasure, mingling toil with peace and rest.” God gives each day, in wise and loving measure, the troubles and the mercies that are sufficient for them. Thank Him. Today’s mercies are not designed to carry tomorrow’s burdens.

There will be mercies tomorrow to carry those burdens.

How shall my soul give worthy thanks to God today? Is that your question? Thank Him for today’s mercies. Trust Him for grace sufficient for tomorrow, tomorrow. The calling you have today is not to arrange for strength and mercies for

*Today’s mercies
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To begin the life of thanksgiving, the Lord says we must not only be free from greed, the love of money, but we must fight anxiety. And His main point is this (Matt. 6: 33), “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” The Lord is saying, “Instead of anxiety over your life, over your child, over yourself, make the kingship of God real by faith. Every moment, hand all over to His Kingly power. Seek to do His will, in the confidence that He has promised that He will meet all of your needs.”

In Matthew 6 the Lord gives reasons, reasons why we must not be anxious. Let us look at a few of them, if only briefly, because we do not know which one is tailored by the Spirit to meet your need today.

He says in verse 25, “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought [do not be anxious] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” The Lord says our life, the life in Jesus Christ, is much more than what we eat and drink and wear. What you eat and drink and wear does not define your

life. We worry about losing the pleasures of this life. We worry about losing our financial status. We are anxious that we have the admiring glances of others for our nice clothes. We want a long life and health. But Jesus says, “Have you lost sight of what life is? Life is not to be found in any of those things. Life is not physical pleasure. Life is not the admiring glances of men. Life is not a long earthly sojourn. But God is life. Life is to have His approval, to be righteous in His Son, and to live for His approval.”

Then He says in verse 26, “Behold the birds of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” What do you see when the birds come to your feeder? You do not see laziness. They are very energetic and watchful. But God feeds them. Birds do not hoard things for the day when God dies. They believe that when the sun comes up tomorrow God will still be God. They are brute creatures. But they believe that God will give them the food that they need for that day. They are not like a squirrel. They do not hoard. God says, “Observe the creation.” God cares for the birds, will He not care for you?

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live a disciplined spiritual life. To remember our Creator is an activity of love. Remembering is always an activity of love. To remember God, your Creator, in love means, therefore, that you must constantly, as young people, be reading your Bible, living a life of prayer, and living your life very close to the church, in the fellowship of the true church, where the Word of God is loved and honored and where it is preached in all of its mighty power and glory. You must hold fast to the faith, to the truth, of Holy Scripture. You must not become a Christian who says, “Well, my faith and my beliefs will be determined by what is convenient and I’ll just get rid of those things that are not convenient for me, that would hold me back from the enjoyment of the sinful things that I might want to pursue now. If the church is telling me that I can’t do that, I’ll just find another church.” That is not remembering your Creator. Hold fast to the truth. Hold fast to it when you are challenged. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

There is a word that we must not overlook in that verse. That is the word “now.” Remember *now* thy Creator. That is a very profound idea. It means to say to us that all true faith in God is *now*, it is never *later*. If our

faith in God does not impinge upon our present life today, we have forgotten Him. True faith is present faith. True faith is not simply the promise of tomorrow. You cannot say to God, “Later.” Sometimes young people and children say to their parents, “Later.” Mom and Dad say something, and you say, “Later, Mom; later, Dad,” by which you mean to say that something else is more important to you right now and, besides, you are not so interested in doing what they tell you to do. God says, Remember Me, now! You can never say to God, “Later.” True faith is now, never later.

Remember God now in your entertainment. Do not say, “Later—I’ll remember Him later. I’ll get out of this phase of wicked entertainment and then, when I get 25 (later), I’ll remember Him.” God says, “You deny Me. You don’t believe in Me. Remember Me *now*. Remember Me now in your values. Remember Me now in your friends. Remember Me now in your temptations.” You say, “I know all about God. Yes, I’ve been taught all of those truths, but later!” To say *later* is to forfeit His power and His grace to sustain you *now*. Remember Him now in the days of your youth.

True faith is now,
never later.

The days of youth are the days in which the channel of life is set, the mold for life is set. That is the way God has made it. It is like concrete. When once it is poured, it is there. Remember God in the days of your youth.

In youth, with all of its beauty and all of its attractiveness, serve the Lord your God. It is very important to do that, because in the days of our youth, first of all, there are decisions that we are called to make. I could better put it, there is the will of God that we must seek. What is that will of God for me? We make those decisions in the days of our youth, and those decisions are with us till we die. The decisions that you make as a young man and a young woman are important. They reach out to the future. They will be with you every day and touch you every day even until the day that you die. There is no such thing, for instance, as casual sex. There is nothing casual about the intimate relation that God has created. There is no such thing as "It doesn't matter because I'm young." It does matter. Remember your Creator in your decisions.

Remember Him in your decisions about your occupation. That is, remember His day.

Remember He is the Creator who said, "Six days shalt thou labor and the seventh thou shalt rest." Remember Him in the days of your youth when you choose an occupation. Do not bow to the dollar. Do not say, "I'm going to remember the dollar, and God can come second." Serve Him.

Remember Him in marriage. Remember Him in deciding whom you are going to marry. If you are not walking with God, do not get married. It does not matter if you are 25 or 30 or 22 or 18, if you are not walking with God, do not get married! Walk with God. Remember your God. Love your God. Love His truth. Learn to love another in God and in His truth. Remember that it is what a person believes and how he lives that is the important thing. Remember that. Remember, it is not his form and it is not her shape. It is not his money and it is not her looks. It is what they believe in their heart. Do they know God? Do they know the Lord Jesus Christ? Do they worship God in the truth? How do they live? Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

"While," says Solomon, "the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say,

*The days of youth
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and clothes and warmth and so much more.

But if we are to give thanks to God for all His spiritual and material blessings, then we must be freed from anxiety. Jesus, in Matthew 6:19-24, has been speaking so beautifully and profoundly of our relationship to the earthly things. He has taught us that it is our relationship to the earthly, our perspective and our attachment, that is so often, at bottom, the cause of our spiritual problems. Our inability to see Father's wonderful grace and our failure to thank Him is created so often by the relationship in which we stand toward the earthly things. If we hoard, we become covetous and greedy. Then we are governed by those things, and we are filled with anxiety that we are going to lose them. And we do not thank God for them. Or, if we do not hoard, then we worry. "Is it going to turn out? Will I make it? Will I have enough?" We become filled with anxiety over those earthly things. And when we are full of anxiety, then too we cannot praise God or give Him thanks.

A trumpet cannot blast stirring notes of praise if it has been filled with dirt. A piano cannot play clear notes if the keys are sticky with molasses. So also, our hearts cannot thank God if they are choked with anxiety.

Our Savior says to us, "Take

no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Our Savior says, the cure for anxiety is to realize that God will always give us grace for today, so that we may live thankfully and contentedly before Him.

As I say, our Lord is warning us that we must not fall into the grips of anxiety over earthly things. "Take no thought," He says. "Do not be seized by anxiety."

We are anxious about everything. The Lord knows that. We are anxious about our health, about ourselves, about our inadequacies, about our jobs, about our looks, about getting married, about the church, about the schools, about our children, about our burdens, about money, about possessions, about bills, about payments, about tomorrow. If we would write a list of all the things over which we tend to worry, the list would go right out the door of our homes. And, at bottom, we would write, we worry that we are worried so much. And anxiety or worry chokes not only peace in our hearts, but thanksgiving to God. We say, "Yes, I suppose I should be thankful today. But I really can't because of the load of anxiety, of trouble, of all the problems that I see coming tomorrow. How can I be thankful today?"

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*September 29, 2013
No. 3691*

*Grace for Today
Rev. Carl Haak*

Dear radio friends,

Our passage for today is found in Matthew 6:34, part of what is called Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," or His "Sermon on the Kingdom of Heaven," where the Savior said to you and to me, "Take therefore no thought for tomorrow: for the tomorrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

There the Lord is warning us against the sin of anxiety and of how anxiety can choke in our hearts any expression of thankfulness. There God is teaching us the wonderful truth that we will be given grace for today. And with that grace for today, we will be enabled to give Him thanks today for His wonderful blessings.

How much we have to give thanks to God for when we look at the spiritual blessings that He has bestowed upon us. Then it becomes a list of blessings greater than we could possibly number. Paul, in his epistles, is constantly pushing back the boundaries of human language in order that we might see the glory of God's grace, the exceed-

ing riches of His mercies, that we might comprehend with all the saints the exceeding love of God in Jesus Christ, which passes knowledge. How much we have to give Him thanks for: for grace greater than all our sins; for faithfulness that never fails; for love that is all-sufficient; for truth that endures for ever; and for all the things that come to us in God's mercy and grace: the church, the preaching of the gospel, the communion of the saints, families, Bibles, prayers, Christian schools. And on and on we could go.

Then there are also the physical and material things that the Lord gives to us. The Lord has made us in such a way that we are utterly dependent upon this creation. We are of the earth earthy. We depend upon air, food, drink, clothing, warmth, rest. We cannot live without these things.

And we have so much of these things. It is really embarrassing. Yes, it is true that economically our nation is being pinched. Work is hard to find. Businesses collapse. Yet, we have had today our choice of food

I have no pleasure in them." Those evil days refer to corrupt days and could be a reference to the end of the world. That is very important. You must remember your Creator in the days of your youth if you are to have the strength to live in the days of the end. But, of course, it also refers to the days of old age. Those days of old age very often are days of testing. Once again, the foundation for our life has been laid in the days of our youth. If you want to understand what that means, then the best thing for you to do is to go and visit the aged in a nursing home, or to visit with any aged person. I guarantee you, that when you visit with an aged person it will not be long before you learn about his youth. It will not be long before you will be able to see the character of his youth. For old age is standing upon the foundation laid in youth. Youth is serious. Remember your Creator.

Are you going to remember Him? By the grace of God you will. Oh, by the grace of God you will! Because, you see, behind this Word of God is something precious. It is not, first of all,

we who remember *Him*, but it is *He* who remembers *us*. Our Creator remembers us. He says, "I have graven you upon the palms of My hands. I cannot forget you." He remembers me—ah, that is everything. God, my Creator, my Redeemer in Jesus, remembers me. There is nothing more beautiful than that. That is my world and life view. That is everything. God knows me, and because He knows me my life has purpose and meaning. It has one purpose: that I might know Him better, that I might walk with Him and serve Him, obey Him and glorify Him, live to Him with His people. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth.

Let us pray.

Father, we do thank Thee again for Thy Word and ask for its blessing upon our soul. We confess, O Lord, that of ourselves we are weak and we are sinful. We need Thy grace. Bless us in this day. Cause Thy Word to be a mighty power and a light unto our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

*September 8, 2013
No. 3688*

*Keeping the Lord's Day Holy
Rev. Carl Haak*

Dear Radio Friends,

The fourth commandment of the law of God reads: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." There God, in this commandment, focuses upon our time and how we are to use our time. There God declares that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our time, the time of His children, how they spend it. In that commandment God says that it is His will as our Redeemer and Savior that "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." We are to work, work hard, to the glory of God for six days. And one day out of seven, which is now the Sabbath of the first day, the resurrection day of Jesus Christ, in that day thou shalt do no manner of work. On that day we are called by our Redeemer and Savior to worship, to worship twice in the church of God and to devote the whole day to our spiritual life.

The fourth commandment says, "I am the Lord of your time. Your time, too, is redeemed by Me." The psalmist confesses in Psalm 31:15, "My times are in thy hand." Time is an instrument of God, to mold us for endless time. As children of God,

we make the glorious confession: "I am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, both in body and soul." Belonging to Jesus Christ as a Christian, both in body and soul, means that also our time, how we spend our time in body and soul, belongs to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. It is not *my* time. It is not that *I* decide what to do on Sunday. But it is Christ who is the Lord of my time. He is the Lord of *everything* that I do. Joyfully, six days I labor for His glory, and on the seventh, the Sabbath, how I spend my time is determined by my relationship to Him.

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is Lord of your time? How do you spend your Sunday? Does your church attendance show that you belong to Jesus Christ and that you use your time to glorify and obey Him? Or do you spend Sunday as your time? Jesus said, in Mark 2:28, "the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Is He Lord of your Sabbath? Is your attendance at your church off and on? Is it once? Are you gone for long periods of time?

wonder of such opportunities? Does the peace of the church have to be removed before you know its wonder? Does indifference first have to drag us to spiritual bankruptcy before we understand the riches of Jesus Christ?

*Does indifference
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ish? Do you read the Scriptures with deep and solemn conviction that God is speaking to you? Do you treasure them up in your heart? Do you pray? Do you have dealings with Jesus Christ personally in your life? If the answer to any of these is "No," do not look anywhere else, but look to yourself and repent.

Address spiritual lethargy now! I do not want that pain of feeling that He is not present. I do not want the pain of thinking that He does not hear me when I call. I do not want to learn that way! Search out your heart.

Is there spiritual lethargy in your heart? Is church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer an experience of strength and joy and spiritual sweetness? Do you experience the joy of your God in your religious duties? If you do not, then do not criticize the church or the preacher or the Bible version or how you were taught about how to pray right. Do not do that! If there is no life in your spiritual activities, look at yourself! Are you lifeless? Are the world and the things of this world more important to you than your Savior? Do you love the Scriptures with a holy rel-

What is the state of your soul today toward the things of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you lethargic? Repent! Are you enamored with the world? Are you unwilling to part with your pet sin? Are you bitter against God? Search out the reason. Repent.

For He is our only Lord, our only Husband. He is our only good. And His church and the things of His salvation are the treasures of life eternal. Oh, may we never greet them with indifference!

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the Word. We pray for its blessing today upon our hearts through Jesus Christ, Amen.

the cost of her lethargy was the felt presence of her lord and her husband. If you read on in the Song of Solomon, you discover that she does indeed find him again; or he comes to her and comforts her. But for a time, for a very painful time, she could not find him. And he did not appear to her to answer her.

The Lord does not do this without reason. For He delights in us His people and church. He rejoices to walk many a mile, experientially, with us. But He is righteous, and the intimacy of His presence is experienced only in the way of repentance and love. The Lord will not give us

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ing our sin and still trying to have Him. In His love He withdraws Himself in our experience to correct us and to make us confess and acknowledge our sin. This is painful. There is nothing so painful. It is painful because of the work of grace in our hearts. We have been made to love Him. The wife loved her husband. And when he was not at the door, it pained her: "I opened to my love and he was not there." The pain of lost

fellowship is rooted in love. If someone departs from you and you do not love him, you are not pained by his departure. But if you love that person and you know that it was your folly, your meanness, your simple lack of caring about him that drove him from you, then you are pained in your heart.

That pain produced tears of repentance. "Oh, what a fool I've been. How cursed be my sloth. Why did I surrender to indifference?" Do you know that type of spiritual pain and repentance? Do you feel horrible when Christ gives you to see the lethargy with which you greet Him?

Does it bother you, does it upset you? Do you cry out, "Why?" Heed the warning! Is this what it must take in the righteousness of God and

in God's providence for us to understand the wonder of His presence? Does it take this: that we must first be made to experience the lack of His presence due to our own sin and lethargy? Does the truth of the gospel of the Reformed faith first have to be taken away before we understand its wonder and preciousness? Do opportunities for you to know the truth in your church first have to cease before you understand the brilliance and the

Do your pleasures and fun and luxuries interfere with the hour of worship? Is your will, your pleasure, your feelings, lord of the Sabbath? Or is Jesus Christ the Lord of your Sabbath, to the glory of God and as a witness to the world around you?

Gratitude runs deep within our veins as redeemed of the Lord. We love the Lord Jesus. We belong to Him by the covenant of His grace. Our gratitude runs deep when on nice summer Sundays we diligently frequent the house of God to hear His Word.

The fourth commandment is God's commandment to every one of us: "Keep the Sabbath Day holy." It is a commandment to all the children of God: Rest in Me.

We have a catechism called the Heidelberg Catechism, a faithful exposition of the Word of God and a faithful exposition of the fourth commandment. In the thirty-eighth question of this Catechism the question is asked: "What does God require on the Sabbath Day?" It does not ask "What does God suggest?" or "What does God recommend?" but "What does God require?" And the answer is: "That all my life I cease from evil works and yield myself to God, and especially on the Sabbath Day, the day of rest, I diligently frequent the church of God to hear His Word, to call upon His

name, and to contribute to the relief of the poor as becomes a Christian." We do not say to the Lord, "Sunday is no big deal. I do as I please." But in our heart, when we hear the fourth commandment, we say, "My times are in Thy hand. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Ps. 31).

The point to be remembered by us today is that the fourth commandment, as it is one of the ten commandments of the law of God, remains as the will of God our Savior for New Testament Christians. It remains the will of God for you and for me as much as any other of the ten commandments. Now, certainly, we would not say, as a Christian and redeemed in the blood of Christ, that an occasional violation of the ninth commandment is permissible. The ninth commandment says, "Thou shalt bear no false witness." We would not say, "Well, occasionally, you know, a lie is OK." Nor would we say that of the seventh commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." As redeemed Christians we would not say, "Well, it is understandable that the child of God is going to fall into fornication occasionally. After all, it is so prevalent. So, occasionally, if children of God give up their chastity or their vows of marriage, this is understandable." We would not say that. We would say that the ninth and

the seventh commandments are the abiding will of the Redeemer, Jesus, for the life of every one whom He has redeemed in His precious blood. Tell the truth—always. Live a pure sexual life—always.

So also, the fourth commandment (Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy) is the remaining and abiding will of our Redeemer Savior Jesus. The requirement of the fourth commandment is that on the day of rest, Sunday, I diligently frequent the church of God. And “diligently frequent the church of God” means twice. If you come once, that is not frequent. That is infrequent. We come twice to hear His Word, and to pray, and to call upon the name of the Lord, and to use the sacraments, and to contribute to the relief of the poor. All of this is behavior that becomes a Christian. This is not behavior that becomes, as some would say, a Puritan, or an Old Testament saint, and we know better now. Or a legalist, or a formalist—someone who is concerned only with *form* and does not have the *heart* of Christianity. No, to keep the Sabbath Day holy, to come diligently to church twice, is behavior that becomes a Christian, one who is redeemed in the blood of Jesus Christ. It becomes a saint of God. “For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a

multitude that kept holyday” (Ps. 42:4). This is consistent. This is in harmony with, this flows out of, the Christian life. This is not an imposition upon a Christian life. This *is* the Christian life.

The fourth commandment is an abiding commandment for twenty-first century Christians—twenty-first century Christians with cottages, with Skidoos, with recreational vehicles, with vacations. It is an abiding commandment, the will of the Redeemer, Jesus.

The first reason that it is an abiding commandment is to be found in the commandment itself, for we read that the fourth commandment is rooted in creation. In Exodus 20:11 we read: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth...and rested on the seventh day.” I bypass, for now, the plain condemnation of theistic evolution that is to be found there in the Word of God. And I bypass what it would mean for you and for me if we were to come to church in faithful obedience to Jesus on Sunday seeking rest, seeking rest for our souls in the unshaken, unbroken Word of God, the Word of truth, and the very first thing the minister would do would be to tear the first three or four pages out of the Bible. What would that do to you, and to your rest in Jesus, if the Bible in its entirety is not the Word of

of God? Do you thirst after the Word of God? What captures your heart? For what do you watch? For what will you get up to see and stay awake to see? For what will you experience inconvenience? A movie? The things of this earth? Earthly friends? For Christ and His Word and His truth and His church?

Are we content that this be so, when we fall into spiritual indifference? Do we think that spiritual indifference is just the way that it goes, that young Christians and new converts are the ones who are enthused, but the people who have been Christians for twenty or thirty years—well, it is just the way it is? Is that the way you think? It is no little thing, you know. For indifference to the Lord Jesus Christ wounds love. What wounds, what hurts your heart as a parent? Probably more than anything else, indifference to your love from your child—the “I don’t care” attitude, the statement: “Yes, Dad, I know. Go ahead, say what you want, but I’m not going to listen. I don’t care.”

Do you and I mourn over the sin of indifference, spiritual indifference to the Lord and to the things of the kingdom, to

our Husband, the Lord Jesus Christ? This is often something that begins inwardly. This deals with the secret walk of your heart with the Savior. Do not fool yourself here. Our outward walk can be without fault. In

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fact, we can be bristling and bursting with activity—while all the time our hearts beat faintly before God. Does sin run roughshod

over you? Do you find yourself yielding to it? Is there sloth and worldliness and pride and unforgiveness and carnality ruling in your heart? Do you perceive the loveliness of the truth of Jesus Christ and of His holy Word? Do the truths of divine grace occupy the supreme position in your heart and are they the great value and beauty?

Beloved, beware of spiritual lethargy.

When the bride did at last arise, she discovered that her husband had withdrawn himself (v. 6). “I opened to my beloved [so finally she did get up]; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.” That he withdrew himself does not mean that he abandoned, divorced her. But it means this:

that those who live in the desert and in the weeds of sin think are great things. But Christ comes to His garden with true spiritual riches of His salvation.

And the response of the bride of the church is (v. 2): “I sleep, but my heart waketh.” Then the cry of Christ is expressed again, “Open to me, my sister, my dove.” Then in verse 3 she says this: “I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?” She is too sleepy. Her husband has come to the garden, but she cannot get up to greet him. She cannot get herself going. Oh, she has excuses. “It’s not convenient, it’s too much bother, it will upset my plans. I’ve gone to bed, I don’t want to get up and get my feet dirty again. I don’t want to have to get dressed again.” But the point is that her own spiritual indifference, her own lethargy, prevents the enjoyment of the blessings of the visit of her lord, of her husband, into her life.

Note here that it was the existence of divine grace that was still in her (I sleep, but my heart waketh). Christ preserves the life of grace within us by grace alone. The point is this: the church, the believer, has fallen into carelessness. The wife knew she fell into carelessness. She knew she should get up. She knew what she should be doing with her spiritual life.

But she did not *feel* like it. And the awful feature is that she was content that it be so. She gives in and accepts her state. She is too sleepy. She is not going to get up. Her love had grown cold.

How much is this true of you and of me with regard to spiritual things, with regard to Christ, to dedication to His church and to His Word? Are you and I characterized by a sickly, spiritual feebleness? Is ours, young people, the spiritual life that constantly says, “Oh, yeah, I know”? Are we the kind of Christian who forever is saying, “I’ll get around to that spiritual activity and that spiritual virtue someday” but he never does?

Is it too far for you to go to church? Is it too much for you to go twice? Do you say on Sunday evening, “I’ve taken off my coat, my shoes; I’ve made my plans”? Is it too much for you to go to the Bible study of your church? You say, “I’ve made my plans. I’ve been busy all day. I’m staying home. I’m too tired.” Are you alert for the pleasures of the world? Do the attractions and pleasures of the world dominate you? Then, do you sleep with regard to the spiritual life? Do you greet the spiritual things with half a heart and the world with all your heart? Where is the world in your life? Be honest! Where is the Word of God in your life? Do you read the Word

God? How could you find rest there, in that church?

The fourth commandment says that it is *rooted* in creation. It teaches that the creation was performed by God in six 24-hour days, and God rested on the seventh. Moses did not give the fourth commandment. The fourth commandment did not begin at Mount Sinai. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, made for man as man. Man was made with the need of rest in God. God made man, even before sin, to need the time when he could put down his hoe and rest. We need the time when we can get out of the truck, hang up the work belt, and enjoy God, waiting upon Him without distraction.

The second reason the fourth commandment is an abiding commandment is that the fourth commandment is rooted in redemption. It is especially God’s commandment for those whom He has redeemed from the bondage of sin. This is found in how the fourth commandment is given in Deuteronomy 5:15. The Ten Commandments are given twice (Ex. 20 and Deut. 5). In Deuteronomy 5, the fourth commandment is stated differently. At least the rationale for keeping it is stated differently. There we read that we must remember the Sabbath Day for this reason: “And remember that thou wast a servant in the

land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” There God is speaking to the redeemed, the redeemed of the Lord, redeemed by a mighty display of the power of the Lord. The redeemed of the Lord must show forth their gratitude to the Lord for their redemption. All the days of my life I must yield myself to the Lord because I have been redeemed by His blood. But central to that, to doing that for six days, is that I will devote one day in seven to Him.

The fourth commandment abides and is necessary for the Christian life. The Christian life cannot endure without the observance of a day of rest. The fourth commandment brings, after all, the first table of the law to its close. Jesus said that there were two tables of the law: Love the Lord thy God; and love thy neighbor as thyself. The first four commandments are in that first table. And at the end of that first table is: Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.

So, look at its place in the ten commandments. It shows the way, how we are to stay on the path of keeping the first three commandments of the law of God. In the first commandment we are admonished

to have God as our trust: Have no other God before Me, have no idol in your heart. In the second commandment we are admonished to worship God as He instructs in His Word. We are to have no graven images. In the third commandment, we are admonished to revere His holy name. We are not to take His name in vain. But how shall we do this? How shall we trust; how shall we worship; how shall we revere the Lord God in our lives, day-by-day? How will we do this? The fourth commandment comes and says, "Remember the Sabbath Day." It is God's institution of maintaining love for Him. Can you maintain love for your wife and children without spending time with them?

But there is more. The breaking of this commandment, the setting aside of the fourth commandment, and the refusal to hallow this day by setting aside our own pleasures and devoting ourselves to the Lord, is to sow in our life apostasy and falling away from the Lord.

In Hebrews 10:23-25, we have words of wonderful encouragement. In the context there, "Let us draw near to God.... Let us hold fast the profession of our faith...." And then that chapter, after that wonderful encouragement, ends with a chilling warning to those who would tread underfoot God, and

who would count the blood of the covenant whereby they are sanctified an unholy thing. Right between the encouragement and the warning, you find this: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (v. 25). To neglect the worship services is the first step on the road to apostasy in your own personal life and in the life of your congregation.

The fourth commandment is utterly crucial, because on this day the child of God finds one thing that his soul needs. If we are to continue faithfully as those who tread the way to Zion (Ps. 84), as those whose hope is set in Christ, in all the glory and the promises of heavenly life; if we are to continue on that pathway, we require something: rest, rest for my soul. Sabbath means rest. The Sabbath, then, has a very appealing ring to it: the word "rest." What does the word "rest" mean to you as a mother who is taken for granted, who is harried and busy from dawn till sunset? Rest. That is an appealing word.

The Sabbath is the rest of God. The Sabbath of the Lord thy God, the rest of the Lord thy God, of course, does not mean that God is idle, that God ceases from His work. When we search the Scriptures we discover that God's rest is His enjoyment of Himself. It is His enjoyment in His work so glorious that He is

the husband (therefore, really, Christ) comes to His wife in the garden in all of His eternal love. He says, "I am come my sister, my spouse, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Is that not wonderful? The Lord calls us as the church "my sister." That tells us that He was made one with us, that He is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters, that He took upon us our flesh so that we might be made the family of God. The church is not only the Lord's wife and bride. We are His sister, His brethren. We have fellowship in Him.

He says the church is "my spouse, I am married to you, I am covenanted to take care of you as my church and to love you. You are my love," He says, "my dove, my undefiled!" He comes in all of His love.

But He comes also as the Lord, and as the crucified and risen Savior. If you are reading the passage with me, you will see in verse 2 that the husband, as he comes to his garden, says, "my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." That is, he appears before the garden as one who has undergone privation, the coldness of the night has fallen upon him, he bears the signs of suffering. Christ has gone through the eternal night of our darkness. All that was out there to condemn us, all the frightening things of judgment

and wrath of a holy God, He has suffered.

Then if you read further, in verses 4 and 5, the wife says that "my beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door." And, when she does finally arise to open to her beloved, her "hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock." When the Lord comes He is covered with myrrh. Myrrh is a spice of embalming, of death, to cover the odors of death. Christ comes to His church in all the wonder of His atoning grace. So to speak, when you touch the handle of the church, it is covered with myrrh. When you think of the church, you must think of the death of Jesus Christ. The church is covered in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, further, He comes in all the blessings of salvation. He comes in His love, He comes as the crucified Savior, and He comes with the blessings of salvation (v. 1). He comes with all the rich blessings of the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, divine grace to strengthen our spiritual lives, the wine of joy to lift our souls, treasures, bounties, riches. Not earthly things. The Lord does not come to you as His child with the promise of money and French food and dresses and human beauty. All of *these* things perish in a moment. These are the things

Lord's words of rebuke against it is found in an Old Testament book called the Song of Solomon. Please open your Bible to the fifth chapter of that book. The Song of Solomon is a picture of Christ and His bride, the church, a picture taken from the life of Solomon as he was married to his wife. In this book, chapter 4:16, we read this: "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out." There the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking through His Spirit, calls for His Spirit to blow upon the church in order that out of the church, the gathering of His people, spices (that is, sweet smells of praise) may flow up to the nostrils of God. In response, the wife of Solomon, the church, says, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." The church, you and I, long for the Lord to come among us in His felt-presence and to be with us as His people.

The church, then, is the garden of the Lord—a garden in which He desires and is pleased to live and enjoy Himself; a garden that He has planted to give off pleasing fragrances of praise to Him. You plant a garden in your back yard, you landscape your yard. Why do you do that? You do that to enjoy it, to relax, to find rest and wonderment in that. You plant an herb garden that is peaceful. There are delicate fragrances to be smelled.

There is the bee balm. Then you put your mouth down to the sage and you taste the thyme and rosemary and cilantro.

So, the Word of God says, is the church. It is the garden that God has planted in order that it might emit rare and delicate and pleasing fragrances of trust and love and joy and worship before the living God. The church is not a dump. The world of sin, from which we were taken, is like a landfill. It emits an odor, a stench, of hatred and greed and covetousness and lust and envy. But in that present world, and indeed out of those who were once of that world, out of the desolate weed bed of the world, God has planted for Himself a garden. And His grace has germinated every seed. The Holy Spirit waters the Word upon the seed in order that we in the church might bring forth that which is pleasing to God.

So, we could well ask the question: "What does the Lord smell in His garden today? What does He smell in your church? What does He smell in your life? Is it the pleasing fragrances of trust, love, joy, and worship?"

In response to the church, we read the words from chapter 5:1ff., "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." And the Lord Jesus Christ comes into His garden in such a way that He reveals all His beauty and sufficiency. First of all,

the all-sufficient and wonderful God. Especially the Sabbath rest is His enjoyment of His perfect work in Jesus Christ—when He raised Him from the dead and set Him on high above all things. It is rest—for God and man. Apart from God, man cannot rest. He has no rest. Isaiah 57:20, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest." But there is a rest for the people of God. That rest is in the completed work of Jesus Christ, perfected in heaven and tasted on Sunday.

Diligently frequent the church of God on the Lord's Day to hear His Word. Attend the church where His Word is preached and honored twice on the Lord's Day

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is...; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:25). There the Scriptures are speaking of an assembling, an assembling for worship—not simply a social gathering, but a time when the people of God are actually called by God. God calls us. Psalm 50:5: "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with

me by sacrifice." Let us go up to the Lord's house. We are called to enter into His house. Do not forsake this call.

We say, "Well, it's easy to become accustomed not to go to church. That happens slowly and gradually." In Hebrews 10, the Hebrew Christians were beginning to forsake the

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assembling on the Lord's Day. It was due in part to persecution. If you read the verses 32 and 33 of that chapter, you will find that

they were enduring a great affliction and that they were being made a gazing stock of the world by reproaches. Sometimes that can come to us. If you diligently come to your church twice on the Lord's Day because you thirst after the Word of God, and you bring your family, then, perhaps, you will hear words like this: "Why? Do you think you're better than everybody else? Do you need to go twice? Why can't we have the family party on Sunday? It's always you who are making a problem with the family. If you miss once, it's not going to hurt. You must think that you're better," they will sneer at you.

Have you endured that reproach, or have you succumbed

to that reproach? Have you become accustomed to going once? Maybe your parents cannot get you out of bed? Maybe you prefer to watch TV, or you are doing your own pleasure on the Lord's Day? We must answer to the Lord. In Luke 4:16 we read of Jesus: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was [as His custom was!], he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." That was His custom on the Lord's Day. His custom was that He would go to church diligently, faithfully.

We must delight ourselves in this day. We must come to church with a sincere, heartfelt love for the risen Savior, in gratitude for all that He has done for us and in anticipation of all that He has laid up for us through His death and His resurrection. We must use the Sabbath Day to stock the cabinets of our heart with spiritual food, so that we can make it through the next six days. And then, after those six days, we return bruised and weary from the fight against sin, that we might again rest for awhile in our Savior. We are fortified on the Sabbath to fight the good fight of faith, that we might yield ourselves for the next six days unto the Lord. Keeping the Sabbath means that you are active in your faith, that you are

living carefully for six days, not worldly for six days and then thinking that you can have a blessed Sabbath, that you can make up for it by going to church. But keeping the Sabbath means that you live out of Jesus Christ, consciously, all the days of your life. And then on the first day of the week you meet with your risen Savior and you learn what the Lord has done for you. The idea of staying home will become foreign to you. You will not look for your own pleasures upon this day. You will not say, "Aw, it's too far to go." But it will be your custom to gather with the people of God.

Hear the word of the Lord. Do not say, "This is too hard." Do not say, "Oh, that preacher is way too strict." But, if need be, let us repent. Let us not say that we can honor the Lord without honoring His day. Let us keep the holy day spiritually, joyfully, actively, out of faith. Keep Sunday. And as you hear the Word in church, let that Word whet your appetite and comfort your soul for the glory that is already ours, and that soon will be ours perfectly in heaven.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the Word. We pray that it may go forth and accomplish Thy purpose. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

September 22, 2013
No. 3690

Spiritual Lethargy
Rev. Carl Haak

Dear Radio Friends,

Our program today issues the warning of the Lord Jesus Christ against the shameful and all too common sin of spiritual lethargy, spiritual dullness, sluggishness, complacency, apathy, a lackadaisical attitude toward the spiritual things of the Lord Jesus Christ, a lethargy not so much seen in the outward aspects of the Christian's life, although they *can* be seen there, but a lethargy that proceeds from the inward decay of the heart toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Make no mistake. We will guard and confess the precious truth of the indestructible nature of the true grace of God. When God's grace has been imparted by the Holy Spirit into the soul, that grace can never die, it cannot fall away. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Pet. 1:5). "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps. 37:24). The faithfulness of God keeps us as His children. The covenant of grace secures us. The finished work of Jesus Christ preserves us. And the indwelling of the

Holy Spirit seals us to eternal glory.

But, due to our own sin and weakness as we are surrounded by a wicked world, and due to our own folly, that life of grace that is imparted to our hearts may experience a decline in our own soul—a painful process of spiritual disease, which may advance slowly, imperceptibly, silently, and unobserved. Suddenly we awake to the realization that there is in our life as Christians no power of holiness, no revulsion to sin; that there is a loss of the experience of the joy of the Lord; and that there is an actual playing with sin and a lukewarm attitude toward the church. Maybe, even further, we find ourselves withdrawing from spiritual things and from the church; we experience bitterness in our heart; and we have no felt-presence of Jesus' walking with us in our life.

Then we ask the question: How came it so? What is the root and origin of these things? The answer of the Word of God is: the sin of spiritual lethargy.

The passage that I want to use to bring this sin out and the

our results *now*. And we say, “Lord, if this is the way it’s going to be, then I’m not interested. I give up. I want the fruit now.”

The Lord says that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. The Lord says, “You don’t know what the Lord will bring from the seeds that are planted.” As you teach your little child his Bible story, as you witness to another, as you are busily engaged in the very often difficult work of the Lord in your marriage, you don’t know what the Lord will bring from it. But I tell you this, that in harvest time, you will come with your hands full with sheaves, rejoicing in God. We shall reap in due season, if we faint not.

To faint means that we would give in to our weariness. We would pass out, we would lose consciousness, we would succumb to our weariness. Then when we faint, we are not conscious. We do not see anymore what the Lord is doing. We need to have the water of the Word of God splashed upon our face.

And we need to hear again: “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Our labor is not in vain in the Lord. So let us be up to the work. Let no obstacle deter us. Let no disappointment distinguish our hope. Let no trial find us unwilling. Let no sacrifice be too much to your work as a husband and wife in your marriage; to your work as a father and mother in your family; to your work as a young person, minister, elder, deacon, or church member; to the work that the Lord has given to you.

And when you are tempted to be weary, then remember His Word: “I am with you till the end of the world. In due season you shall reap with Me.”

Let us not be weary in well-doing.

Let us pray.

Father in heaven, bless Thy Word to our hearts this day. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

September 15, 2013
No. 3689

Not Weary in Well-doing
Rev. Carl Haak

Dear radio friends,

The Bible was written with us in mind. It was written with your particular circumstances in life in mind. We can never say that the Scriptures do not help us, that they do not know, that they do not visualize this problem or this situation that we are facing. They are written by the Holy Spirit with us in mind.

That is especially true of the New Testament epistles of the apostle Paul. These epistles are not to be viewed as abstract, religious theses on theological questions submitted for a doctorate in the University of Jerusalem. These epistles were written to Christians, to churches, to people of God—written to be the light of God and the balm for their soul.

This is especially the case in the verse that we find in Galatians 6:9, where we read, “And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” In that Word of God the Scriptures are confronting us with the very serious and very common spiritual sin of becoming weary in well-doing. Here we have a people who are pointed in the right direction.

We could not say that they were on the wrong road. But they had become weary, tired, hopeless, and fatalistic. They were shuffling along, doing the right things alright, but doing them with drooping heads and hands. The Christian work that they had in the home and in the church and in their own personal life had become a burden. And you heard many sighs of weariness. A certain resignation you could see in them. They began to withdraw themselves emotionally from the work. Frustration was evident.

You could not say that the people had ceased from the work. The church was attended, the minister was making his sermons, the elders and deacons were doing their work, the prayers were offered, the laundry was done, the dishes were cleaned, and the beds were made. But due to difficulties and sins, the vigor of the Christian life had escaped them, and a certain fatalism, a resignation, and a hopelessness was characterizing them.

Is that true of you? Let us bring our souls under the rebuke and under the balm of the Word

of God, which is written to us and which so well knows us and searches us out. The exhortation of God is “Do not be weary in well-doing.”

There is a great temptation, is there not, for those who are blessed to do the work of the Lord Jesus to become weary in well-doing. We are prone to give in and to give up in doing good.

What is meant here by “well-doing”? The idea is not humanitarian relief. It refers to the work that Christ calls His people to do in His name. We read in Ephesians 2:10 that we are “his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” We were saved by grace alone in order that we might live a life of well-doing.

And that well-doing is vast. It covers all of our life and it covers every child of God, from the oldest to the youngest. It is our entire life as we are to live that life now out of the life of Jesus Christ.

In the context, the apostle Paul has in mind our church life (read the previous verses of Galatians 6). He has been referring to the communion of

saints and to our calling to go to a man who has been overtaken in a fault and restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. He has exhorted us in the church to bear one another’s burdens. And he has told us that we must

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do this in all humility. He has referred to the work of the minister. He speaks of him in verse 6, of the man who is taught

in the word to communicate to all the people of God that living Word of God.

Now, when the apostle says, “Don’t be weary in well-doing,” he is not referring just to a few people, but he is referring to all the people of God. He is not referring just to giving things to the poor, but he is referring to our whole life as we are to live that life out of Jesus Christ. Does he refer to the work of elder or deacon in your church? Yes. But mothers in the home and fathers, too, as they bring up their children, as they go to work to support their family. Our church life is included. Our marriages are included. And all the deeds of thoughtfulness and kindness that we are to do in His name. Witnessing to the gospel and pursuing the evangelism call of the church. All of these things are well-doing.

Literally, we could translate

shall be recompensed abundantly. We shall reap in due season, if we faint not.

One day, says the apostle, your eye shall behold all that God has intended to accomplish through our weak and sinful efforts. And when that harvest comes, in that day of the Lord when we shall see all that He has worked through our sinful labors in the home and in the church, in marriage and in the family, when we see what God is going to bring out of it, we will shake our heads and we will wonder why we ever thought about giving up. We will

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be ashamed of thinking that it was not worth it. So glorious will be that harvest that if we had to go through it all again and do all the work all over again, we would be ready to undergo a hundred times more difficulty and trial. In the face of such a harvest there shall be abundant sheaves, rich glory, all of God.

And we shall rejoice with Him. We shall reap in due season if we faint not. But hear the Word. We shall reap *in due season*, in God’s time. The results of the work are not immediate, because God wishes to show that it is entirely of His grace and wisdom. It is not for

us to regulate the time and the seasons. The harvest will be abundant. It is enough for us to know that. But when that harvest shall be seen, that is of the Lord—in due season, in God’s time.

We are just like little children, you see. We are just like little children in our Christian labor. Do you remember when you were a first or second grader? Perhaps our teacher wanted to teach us about seeds and how they germinate, and we would get the Styrofoam cups and the potting soil and the bean seeds. Our teacher chose the bean

seed because it is one of the quickest sprouting seeds. Then you remember that we planted those bean seeds in the cups and would water them and would look for that sprout to come up, and it didn’t come up that day. When we came back to school the next day, it was still not up. Then we lost interest in it because it did not happen quick enough.

That is the way we are. Let God veil His face. Let God lead us in a way we cannot figure out. Let God spend plenty of time preparing the soil...and we lose heart. We want results; we want *our* results; and we want

how much I do? Do you want the praise and the glory for those things? Then," the Lord says, "examine yourself. Why are you weary? Is it well-doing? Are you weary in well-doing?"

It is the blessed work that Christ has given us to do. It is not a dreary task. When we begin to look at our Christian life and our Christian work and calling as a dreary

task, we are insulting God! It is a sin! The work the Lord has given to us is not drab. It is not ho-hum! It is the life of the Son of God in us. It is

the only work that matters on the earth. It came to us of grace! Why are you doing it? Are you doing it wearily, because you have to? Is that why you show patience with your wife? Is that why you care for your children? Is that why you witness of the gospel to others? Is that why you come to church—because you *have to*? Is it all drudgery to you at the bottom line? Do you not really care about it, do you not want to do it? Then God says this to you and to me: "You insult Me. You sneer at the wonder of My grace and love." Whoever told you that you were to do these things merely out of external constraint, dropping down your hands all the while and sighing in your heart? God

never told you to do that! This is your *privilege*—a wonderful privilege of God to do it all. If your Christian life has become weariness and burdensome, and the calling you have in home or church or marriage is a weariness to you, you had better go back. You must retrace your steps to where that all started and you must understand that you are what you are by the grace of God. Therefore, you must do it out of great thankfulness, not weariness.

Then the Lord encourages us. He says that we

shall reap in due season, if we faint not. The Lord is saying to us that all the work that is done in His Name is not a fruitless work. There shall come a great harvest—a harvest that God already has in mind and has attained already through His Son. You see, there is nothing that so produces a weary spirit in us as a suspicion that all that we are doing is for nothing. And there is nothing that so dispels that weariness and infuses strength into our soul as to know that, for as much as our labor is in the Lord, it is not in vain. It will be crowned with success. Every act that we do in His name, every duty of service, every sacrifice made, every privation to which we submit, all of these things

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this "beauty work." Do not be weary in beauty work. That is a very powerful word of God because there we see that apart from God every doing, every act, and every deed is darkness. Apart from the beauty of God's grace working first in our heart, every work that is performed on the earth, the Bible says, is ugly, smelly, soiled in pride. But there is beauty. And that beauty comes from God alone. It

is the beauty of His grace when He works through His people in Jesus Christ. It is that which does not then come out of self, that which is not rooted in self, but that which is of grace in us. That is beauty work. And even though now those works, too, are shot through with our own sin, yet God smiles because He sees in that work His wonderful grace. Now do not be weary in beauty work.

Further, we learn that this well-doing is synonymous with sowing to the Spirit. Look at verses 7 and 8 and see that the Word of God has set down a principle for everyone. There we read, "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." There are only two possibilities. One is either sowing in his life to his destruction, or he is sowing in his life to life eternal. The

Word of God says that there is absolute correspondence between what is sowed and what shall be reaped. You do not sow one thing and expect to reap another thing. So the Word of God is asking us, "What are you sowing in your life? Are you sowing out of your flesh, or are

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you sowing out of the Spirit of Christ? If you sow out of your flesh, you are going to reap corruption. If you sow by the Spirit of

Christ, by grace you receive a reward of life eternal."

Are you sowing greed in your life as a father? Then the Word of God says, "Don't expect contentment but expect a constricted heart, and anxious nights, and narrow eyes." Are you sowing gossip in your church? Do you talk about others? Then do not expect peace and love in your church or in your marriage or family. But you shall harvest division and tension. Are you, as a young man, sowing lust through pornography in your life? Then do not expect that you are ever going to be satisfied if God gives you a wife. What you sow you shall also reap.

So, well-doing, then, is to be understood as that work of the Spirit of Christ whereby we sow looking for the life that is

to come, that we might have an abundant harvest then.

But you understand that that well-doing is very hard, it is very difficult, it is continuous, it is never-ending. And this is really, I believe, the point of the apostle. You do not see the fruit of this kind of work quickly. Because that is the case, we become discouraged and our souls begin to sag. You say to me, “Are you telling me that my work as a mother is beauty-work? Are you trying to mock me? Have you ever seen my house on a Monday morning? It’s upside-down. Beauty-work with my child? I yell at my child. How can that be beauty-work?” “Beauty-work in our marriage” you say to me? “Well, that’s hard work!” And maybe you say, “It’s never going to change. Our marriage is not going to change. He’s not going to change. We’re just going to have to resign ourselves to have to live with it. We give up.”

Maybe you say that in the church. You say, “I’ve tried to be active in the communion of the saints. I’ve tried to have people over to my house. There is no reciprocation. Beauty-work? I’ve been hurt in the church!” Maybe as an elder you say to me, “Pastor, you’re calling our work beauty-work, but in the church it seems that the problems are greater than anywhere else!” And maybe personally you say, “I’m weary.

I can’t seem to get out of the doldrums. The spiritual resilience has departed from my life because of obstacles, because of the sins of others, because of my own sins. I’m tempted to say, ‘Well, if that’s the way they’re going to be, see if I care!’”

So often we find ourselves then settling down into the routine. The earlier days of fresh spiritual vigor are a distant dream. We become discouraged and we become tempted to withdraw from doing good—in church, in marriage, in family, in our personal life. We begin to multiply obstacles and magnify obstacles and say, “We can’t do that!” We are ready to quit. And we would quit, if we could find a good excuse for doing so.

That is a great danger—to become weary in well-doing. It is a great danger because it is going to lead to hopelessness. Then, perhaps, we do not quit the work. We continue doing the good things that we are supposed to be doing, but we do not have the heart for it. We do not have a heart anymore for our marriage, for our family, for our church, for our personal walk with Christ, for witnessing. It all becomes a duty that we simply resign ourselves to, and we go through the motions. And a voice begins to speak within you. It says, “Give up, give way, give in. You’re weary, you’re not appreciated. It’s too much for

you to do this.” And we begin to think that we are some kind of martyr. Even though we do not have it in our hearts, we go on and say, “Well, I’m just going to do it, even though I don’t care anymore.” Is that the way you are?

Or if it does not lead to hopelessness, then perhaps you are going to turn to some kind of artificial stimulus. You begin to look for something to carry you along. Perhaps you say, “Alcohol will give me a temporary feeling of well-being—even though the problems remain. Those problems are too hard, so I’m going to medicate myself—with other interests, hobbies, some place to put my heart.”

This is what is going on in the church, too. The church, today, is saying, “Well, preaching the Reformed faith and holding the distinctives of the gospel just don’t do it. The church doesn’t grow. So we have to work up new methods. We need artificial stimulants. We need a program for youth. We need to put up signs in front of church—some kind of advertisement to get people to come into the church. We’re in a rut. Religion needs something new. We’ve grown weary of the work of the Lord. We don’t think that preaching and teaching the gospel is going to do it. We don’t believe that the nitty-gritty of Christian fellowship, of saints rubbing off on

each other—that this is going to work. We need an artificial stimulant.”

The only problem with artificial stimulants is this: though they appear so plausible to our flesh, they only end up in exhausting us much more and making us addicted.

The Lord says, “Do not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Now that is encouragement. The encouragement is really a rebuke, first of all. Let us not be weary in well-doing! That is the work of the Lord. That is what the Lord says to you. He says, “Why are you weary? Why are you half-hearted in *My* work? Why are you tempted to quit? Have you been doing *My* work in your own strength instead of the power of *My* Spirit? You think that it depends upon you? You think that if it does not turn out the way you want, it has failed? Is that how you are rearing your kids? Do you think that by your strength you are going to make them turn out? Is that why you are weary? You think you have to figure everything out and be in control of the outcome? You are doing it in your strength? Well then, you ought to be weary!”

“Why are you doing this good?” the Lord asks. “Are you doing it to please yourself? Are you doing it to be able to say, ‘How wonderful I am. Look at