

June 4, 2023

This Week: 9:30 a.m. Reading Service
6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 5)

Next Week: 9:30 a.m. Reading Service
6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service (LD 6)

Advance Notices:

- On Sunday, **June 11** after the evening service, Rev. Witvoet hopes to hold a sing along in the basement of the Rock Valley church with the post high school/young married adult group.
- Rev. Witvoet hopes to be in our midst **June 18** at 2:30 p.m.
- Thursday, **June 22**, 7:00 p.m., there will be a presentation in Sioux Center at the Interstates Building about the missionary work supported by Bonisa Mission. "Brother Charles" hopes to visit our area to speak about his work and experiences in China.
- All the Lord willing-

Collections: Today: 1st General Fund Next week: 1st General Fund
2nd NAGMission 2nd Alpha Center

We Remember in Prayer:

- Mr. Kleijer, who has been declared candidate by the curatorium.
- Our denomination, as no new students were accepted into the theological school.
- With thankfulness, that our sister denomination in the Netherlands was able to accept 5 new students into their theological school.
- Our need for rain.
- Our widows and lonely ones, the unborn, our married couples, prodigal sons and daughters, and all those with hidden crosses.

MEDITATIONS

Gamaliel's lecture

"... for if... this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it..." Acts 5:38, 39

The disciples were told to appear before the Sanhedrin, a group of 70 hostile Jews. Filled with the Spirit of Pentecost, they gave their testimony, not afraid of what people thought. As the disciples spoke, the members of the Sanhedrin's fury escalated, resulting in an uproar and their wanting to kill the disciples. This shows man's natural enmity against religion.

In the midst of the tumult, an old rabbi requested their attention. It was Gamaliel, a revered professor of theology in Israel. He had taught many students, including Saul of Tarsus. It was instantly quiet when he started to speak. Old Gamaliel asked that the disciples be sent outside for a while and then he started a remarkable lecture. The core of his lecture was that in religious life there is a 'work of man' and a 'work of God'. Conversion that is 'of man' will be destroyed and conversion worked by God can never be broken. Four things can be learned from Gamaliel's lecture.

First, the necessity of separating preaching to distinguish between true and false conversion, between those traveling to heaven and those traveling to hell. Nowadays, many preachers think that separating preaching isn't necessary anymore. They claim that it is damaging and confusing to the souls of the hearers. Gamaliel was a lot smarter than many current preachers.

Gamaliel, as well as Saul, were very hostile Jews, spewing their hatred against Jesus and His disciples. Nevertheless, at that time, Gamaliel taught a very serious, timeless lesson. Scripture and experience had taught Gamaliel that not all that seems to be the work of the Holy Spirit is so.

Second, we can learn from Gamaliel's lecture that in true conversion, all what is done by self will perish. Have you ever noticed a spider's web? When the sun shines on it, it sparkles beautifully. Where does that web come from? Out of the spider's stomach. We can also have such a 'shining' conversion, a delicately spun web of religious hope and expectation, which is merely 'work of man'. It lacks true humiliation before God. The poor, sinner's life is missing when man thinks he is something and that he has something.

Gamaliel used an example of the 'work of man' in his lecture; a certain Theudas, who 'boasted himself to be somebody'. With his 'conversion', man thinks he has life, although he never assented to his death sentence for sin and never bowed in the dust before God. 'Work of man' never takes refuge as a lost sinner in Christ's blood and wounds.

Third, the lecture of Gamaliel teaches us that there is a 'work of God' which is necessary to learn in our lifetime. How do we know if it is the true 'work of God'? With the 'work of man', the sinner is something. With the 'work of God', the sinner becomes nothing before God. It is a blessing to know this work that humbles, breaks down and destroys everything of self. That work makes stony hearts as wax in God's hands. Sinners have a godly sorrow for sin and grieve about it. The end of that work is: Christ is everything and man is nothing.

The final lesson from Gamaliel's lecture is that there is a different ending for the 'work of man' from the 'work of God'. The end of the 'work of man' will be eternal destruction. How terrible it

will be if your entire religious life and conversion is as a delicately spun web that came forth out of yourself. It will be quickly wiped away before God's countenance and you will be unable to bear His wrath.

However, on the other hand, God's work cannot be destroyed. Surely, Satan is busy trying to break that work and to sift man as wheat. God's people often fear being hypocrites and, bowed down by unbelief, are concerned that their conversion is not a 'work of God'. People of God, keep courage; His work is steadfast and sure.

Which 'work' is in your heart? -Rev. A. Moerkerken

Having shown, in the first part of the Catechism, that all men are in a state of eternal condemnation, on account of not having rendered the obedience which the law of God requires, we are next led to inquire whether there is, or may be, any way of escape or deliverance from this state of misery and death? To this question the catechism answers, that deliverance may be granted, if satisfaction be made to the law and justice of God, by a punishment sufficient for the sin that has been committed. The law binds all, either to obedience, or if this is not rendered, to punishment; and the performance or payment of either is perfect righteousness, which God approves of in whomsoever it is found.

There are two ways of making satisfaction by punishment. The one is by ourselves. This is the one which the law teaches and the justice of God requires. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the law to do them." (Gal. 3:10.) This is legal.

The other way of making satisfaction is by another. This is the method which the gospel reveals, and the mercy of God allows. "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son, &c." "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c." (Rom. 8:3. John 3:16.) This is evangelical. It is not, indeed, taught in the law; but it is no where condemned, or excluded. Neither is it repugnant to the justice of God; for if only satisfaction be made on the part of man by a sufficient punishment for his disobedience, the law is satisfied, and the justice of God permits the party offending to be set at liberty, and received into favor. This is the sum and substance.

~Ursinus Commentary on Lord's Day 5

Consistory

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Netherlands Reformed Congregation

Sioux Falls, SD



*Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be
attentive to the voice of my
supplications.
Psalm 130:2*

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 or 6:30 p.m.