

"contending earnestly for the faith ..." Jude :3

editorial

Life can be very confusing, and it is people who make it so. Sometimes it seems that our fellow humans just think too much. In fact, so much thinking goes on that the obvious becomes hidden.

For example, you would think that following instructions couldn't be too hard. You'd think that if you told someone to do something, and told them how to do it, that you would be able to leave and return a while later to see the job done. Properly. The way you wanted it done. The way you explained it.

Sometimes I leave a list of jobs for my children to do when I go away. When I come home again I ask them how they went. They tell me all the good and loving things they did. But then I ask them, "What about the jobs I gave you?" Their reply, "I forgot", or "I was too busy making this present for you."

And then I sit them down and explain to them the meaning of obedience. It's "to follow instructions", not "be nice".

We do the same. God asks us too, "But what about that which I asked you to do?" We can become so busy being performers that we forget to be obedient. Consider the following thoughts by a certain Susan Maycinik:

"Obedience is finding time to let the Word of God dwell in you richly. Performance is quickly scanning a text so you can cross it off your Bible reading plan.

"Obedience is being hospitable to the lonely. Performance is being anxious to impress.

"Obedience is doing your best. Performance is wanting to be the best.

"Obedience is saying yes to whatever God asks of you. Performance is saying yes to whatever people ask of you.

"Obedience is doing God's will. Performance is avoiding wrong for fear of getting caught.

"Obedience springs from fear of God. Performance springs from fear of failure.

Now, are you obedient or just a great performer?

Eric Dekker

Aim:

Romans 12:2 teaches all of God's people: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

This magazine will encourage its readers to earnestly contend for the faith, and to think and act biblically, in the good traditions of the Church of all ages. Its basis is God's word, as the Church confesses in the Three Forms of Unity. It is intended for the younger members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, and is produced in co-operation with the Una Sancta. Subscription to the Contender is automatic with subscription to the Una Sancta.

It is not meant to be exclusively for unmarried members who still attend the Youth Bible Study Clubs, but for all those who fit within the loose parameters of 16 to 30 years of age.

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formalism

Jesus warned his disciples, 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees...' (Luke 12:1). Jesus' warning seems somewhat irrelevant to me today. I am not even tempted to practice Pharisism. I am not interested in praying on the street corners, in fasting twice a week, in visiting the temple, in wearing a phylactery, memorising Torah, and whatever else the Pharisees did. In fact, I think I'm far removed from doing anything like the Pharisees did. But am I? Are you? So why the warning?

Pharisee means 'separated one'. The Pharisees insisted on the strict observance of the Jewish ritual laws. A distinctive feature of the Pharisees was their strong commitment to observing the law of God as it was interpreted and applied by the scribes. This interpretation by the scribes, and the ways in which they adapted the Law to suit the needs of their day, became a part of the 'tradition of the elders' (Mark 7:3). The Pharisees were known for keeping the 'tradition of the elders', especially the laws of tithing and ritual purity.

The problem with the Pharisees was not their attention to the law and the keeping of the law. For the people of the covenant, obedience to the law of God was required. The problem was not that they were attempting to show their love of God through their works, rather than through their faith. What a child of God does is important. Our works are the fruits of our faith. James tells us that 'faith without works is dead' (James 2:26). Those who will stand justified before God will be justified on account of the works they have done (2 Cor 5:10, Rom 2:5-10).

The problem with Pharisism was that it was based on a totally false self-image. The Pharisees did not understand that they were unworthy, shameful people, deserving of all blame. They did not understand that they could not make themselves acceptable to God. They had no idea about their own guilt and shame. They were ignorant of their own motives and passions. They were seriously self-deceived. They were enemies of God, who promoted themselves as friends of God, because they were blind to the truth.

The Pharisees had an image of what a good and righteous man should look like. And so they set about to arrange their lives around this picture. Their exact religiosity, their careful morality, their attention to the finest details of the law were conformed to this picture to present themselves righteous. They took pride in their good works. Their humility was false. But this did not fool Jesus! 'Woe to you Scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness' (Matt 23:27-28). Jesus revealed them for what they were - hypocrites. They were acting out a part, a role in a script they had written for themselves, based on the image of righteousness. This approach was contagious, like leaven.

'When we see the true nature of Pharisism, the Pharisee might not be so unfamiliar.'

The law said, 'You shall not murder', so the Pharisee avoided killing another human being. But he made no effort to avoid the feelings of hatred toward his neighbour, or the wishing of harm on him. He congratulated himself for never having committed the crime of murder, but ignored all the murderous impulses in his heart (Matt 5:21-22). The law said, 'You shall not commit adultery', so the Pharisee avoided having sexual relations with another man's wife. But he went to great lengths to become married to the woman his adulterous heart desired, even divorcing his current wife to do so (Matt 5:27-28, 19:3-12, Mark 10:11-12). The Pharisee focused on keeping some laws, while ignoring other laws that were more incriminating. He strained out the gnat and swallowed the camel (Matt 23:24). He did not take the law seriously, but worked hard to create the appearance of taking it seriously.

When we see the true nature of Pharisism, the Pharisee might not be so unfamiliar. The Pharisee of the New Testament may be a character of the distant past, but the characteristics and strategies still exist.

A Pharisee who is skilled in his portrayal of the image can convince others to employ the same tactics, so that they, too, can present an image of righteousness. Many people become Pharisees by receiving the teachings of other Pharisees. Like Paul, they become zealous for God: 'What's more, I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. And zealous? Yes, in fact, I

the Christian Democratic Party and their causes. As a small party, the CDP is not entitled to Government funding for their campaign as larger more widely supported parties are. This means that the CDP needs to fund their own campaign.

The amount of money required for a campaign is considerable. The CDP hopes to raise \$25,000 for the Federal elections and the same again for the State election. This is too large a sum to raise through cake stalls or coin collections. Most of the financial contributions are from prominent Christians in the Perth community who pledge to support the party. The party has doubts that they will reach the amount required for the elections and will probably be forced to rely on cheaper, less effective means of campaigning, such as speaking to churches, and encouraging people to promote the party by word of mouth.

One cheap way to get the news around is to get the media interested. This has proved difficult for the CDP, because newspapers are no longer interested in Christian affairs and are unwilling to provide coverage on the party. While the CDP has had many interviews from sympathetic journalists, few of these have been published. Other times the story has been twisted and used to oppose the party. One letter to the Editor that the party sent to the West Australian was not published, but when resent without the party's name the letter was published.

As young people there are ways we can help the CDP in their campaign.

We can:

- Talk with our friends about politics and the value of voting CDP
- SMS our friends about the CDP
- Email our friends, relatives and acquaintances about the CDP and the value of voting for them
- Volunteer to man a polling booth on election day to promote the CDP.

(Contact a SPYSC member for more information!)

Why not help in one of these simple ways!

Against the Odds? Not with God on Our Side!

Vivian Hill, the Canning candidate, began with a question - what did Noah, Elijah and Shadrach have in common? Well, he told us, each of these godly men went against the odds - and were blessed by God for their faith! God did not ask these men to take a path that guarantees results, but to follow what's right. Throughout history, God's faithful people have rarely been in the majority.

The small size of the CDP stops many Christians from voting for the CDP. "Why bother to set up the CDP, or to vote for them? They're tiny and they'll never get anywhere." The Christian Democratic Party is definitely fighting against the odds. But does that mean they cannot succeed? "...If God is for us, who can be against us." If in our vote we are doing God's will, then He is on our side too! And with God all things are possible!

'The advantage of joining a Christian party, such as the CDP, is that the policies of their party align with their own beliefs and God's Word.'

Wake Up Christians!

The candidates left us, and all Christians in Perth, with a challenge: Are we going to represent God in our voting and political involvement? Are we going to be a voice where it is needed, where Christians are humanly in the minority? Let's be available for God and pray He will do great things through us in the coming election!

Hester Bax and Rose Vermeulen

What's so threatening about the Greens and the Democrats?

As Australians we are a pretty laidback people, and as Australian Christians, historically we have taken a back seat in political affairs. But what happens in politics and who gets in power can have great effect on our lives as Christians and on whether God's name is glorified in Australia.

To many uninformed Christians, the Greens and the Democrats seem to be pretty harmless at face value, and they therefore receive votes from unassuming Christians who turn up at the polling booth with a decision to make. But despite their seemingly innocent names, these parties are not only about protecting God's creation or promoting democracy. On the contrary! There are some aspects of the two parties' policies and beliefs that promote the decay of the morality of Australian citizens and/or directly threaten freedom of worship in Australia.

Below are some issues that the party or its members have voted for in the past, or are known to be promoting:

The Greens

- Ban prayers at the start of each sitting day in State and Federal Parliaments
- Want to force Christian Churches and schools to employ homosexuals and transvestites or face crippling anti-discrimination legal action.
- Want to stop government funding for Christian schools
- Legalisation of euthanasia
- Legalisation of abortion
- Voted against a law defining marriage as only between a woman and a man
- Legalisation of same-sex marriages
- Legalisation of same-sex adoptions
- Want to provide free medical procedures for people to have transgender changes.
- Legalisation of ecstasy, speed and heroin.
- Want to give people a guaranteed adequate outcome without needing to seek work.
- Believe world population growth should be reversed

The Democrats

- Want to enforce access for homosexual teachers to Christian schools
- In Parliament champion the cause of homosexuality and lesbianism
- Voted against a law defining marriage as only between a woman and a man
- Legalisation of same-sex marriages
- Legalisation of same-sex adoptions
- Supported lowering the age of consent, effectively, to 14 years between adult males and boys
- Shown support to unrestricted access to pornography, providing it does not depict persons under the age of consent or under compulsion.
- Voted against censorship of obscene material on the Internet

Can you imagine trying to live our lives as Christians and teach our covenant children the ways of Christ if these parties had their way?

The Candidates

The CDP has some promising candidates standing at the Federal election this year. Candidates for the WA Senate include:

Dr Lachlan Dunjey, a baptist medical doctor

Peter Watt, a Catholic Christian counselor

Dr Norman Gage, a Palliative Care Doctor

They have secured candidates for many of the Lower House seats; of particular interest to us is the seat of Canning, where Mr. Vivian Hill, a teacher and former principal, is standing.

The CDP members only need 1/7 of the vote to get in. These votes need not be only primary votes; they can also include secondary votes.

Getting the Message Out There

Madeleine Goiran outlined for us some of the difficulties of raising votes and awareness for

harshly persecuted the church ...' (Phil 13:5,6).

Jesus warned us against the Pharisees, but in this He also warns against becoming a Pharisee. The teachings are contagious, promoting the image of righteousness, and encouraging us to conform to it. They show the goodness in a Pharisee, proving his moral superiority over others. The Pharisee believes he is truly a good person. He is blind to the truth. Jesus said that Pharisees are 'blind guides leading the blind, and if one blind person guides another, they will both fall into the ditch' (Matt 15:12-14).

'To be a Pharisee is to act out of my self-chosen image of righteousness so believably that I persuade even myself that it is true.'

Spiritual blindness is caused by our sinfulness. 'The result was that their minds became dark and confused' (Rom 1:21). 'When they refused to acknowledge God, He abandoned them ... and their lives became full of every kind of wickedness' (Rom 1:28,29). It is a vicious circle. Our sinfulness causes

blindness, which causes us to sin even more. Pharisees focus on themselves, and cannot see God. If you are humble, and can see and acknowledge your own sinfulness, then you can see God. There are those who may be proud of their work for 'God'. They are proud of their Bible knowledge, of their popularity, their wealth, their 'good works' and deeds of 'kindness' shown to others. But 'God sets Himself against the proud, but He shows favour to the humble (James 4:6). Jesus said, 'I have come to judge the world. I have come to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they can see that they are blind.' The Pharisees asked, 'Are you saying we are blind?' And Jesus answered, 'If you were blind, you wouldn't be guilty, but you remain guilty because you claim you can see' (John 9:39-41). To be a Pharisee is to act out of my self-chosen image of righteousness so believably that I persuade even myself that it is true.

'Beware of the leaven ...' Jesus was talking about these false teachings of the Pharisees. The danger in these teachings is that they appeal to my sinful nature. In order to protect myself from this 'leaven', I need to constantly check my motives. Do I do everything in humility in order to keep the commands 'Love the Lord your God ...' and 'Love your neighbour ...'? Or am I trying to do my bit for my own reputation and image? Am I deceiving myself and others?

Lisa Houweling

letter to the editor

big words little words

A few years ago a discussion came up in a small group of youth about whether big words (commentary jargon) or little words (everyday language) are more appropriate for articles such as those published in Contender. On the one hand, one discusser pointed out, big words can be more specific, point more directly to concepts. But on the other hand, what's the use of all this fancy jargon if only a fraction of the youth fully comprehend it?

In using little words you have the danger of "dumbing down" your article, "catering for the lowest common denominator," someone argued. But at least a good percentage of the readers will

be able to follow the article, and take something away with them to think about. Our Saviour Jesus never worked in words that the most simple people (fishermen and carpenters) could not understand, yet His messages were deeply profound, making the difference between Life and Death for many people.

What do other readers think? Is it possible to use simple wording to convey complex concepts? Or should we stick to commentary-style writing to ensure we keep our standards high?

Hester Bax

on a mission pop into papua

"Mike Papa Whiskey on the ground Nabire." Justin ended the radio contact with the flight follower and taxied the Cessna 206 down the runway and into the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) base where everyone on the base had gathered to welcome us. Carmen and I had flown from Perth to Timika (Papua) via Bali, and Justin had picked us up for the one hour flight across the mountains to Nabire. So began a six week experience of Papua, Indonesia¹.

Spending time with our cousins Justin and Corrinne Koens was a great opportunity to renew contact and get to know their children, Joshua and Hadassah. We also got a better understanding of the MAF pilots' jobs and the day-to-day lives of the MAF families. At the same time we were exposed to some of the pleasures and difficulties of living and working in a different culture.

'Life can also be very lonely. There is close contact with the one or two other families on the base, but all other family and friends are distant.'

MAF

MAF's Purpose is "to multiply the effectiveness of the Church using aviation and other strategic technologies that overcome barriers in reaching the world for Christ." The reality of this happening in Papua is evident. In villages high in the mountains, virtually unreachable by the outside world, people gather together every Sunday to hear God's Word proclaimed in their own languages. Only two to three generations ago these people only knew a life of spirit appeasement, witch killing² and tribal warfare.

The first missionaries who came to the interior of Papua often trekked for days over rugged mountains, fighting their way through the thick jungle before reaching their destinations. It is not surprising then, that high on the priority list was the building of airstrips. With the use of the planes missionaries are able to get in and out of the villages easier, and these areas now also have access to doctors and medical

supplies.

Hitadipa is one of the villages which the MAF pilots fly to, only accessible by air. We were able to spend one week in Hitadipa with a missionary named Lois Belsey. Lois only has electricity for three hours each evening when the generator is turned on and apart from fruit and vegies she relies on the planes to get all her food and supplies. So we took food with us. The Saturday before we went was spent preparing a few meals. First thing in the morning we went to the market to buy some beef and vegetables. Then back at home we had to cut the fat off the meat and grind it into mince before it was ready to be used in meals. We sifted enough flour for seven loaves of bread and packed an esky full of everything from margarine and spreads, coffee and milk powder to shampoo, conditioner and toilet paper.

Lois works with the local Moni people, translating books and songs into their own language. She also distributes Bibles, Bible school books and literacy books to other Moni villages in the area. Lois is a nurse and she teaches ladies in the village to diagnose and treat illnesses so that they can look after others in the village. However, certain medical cases cannot be treated in the village and in these cases a flight request is made to MAF to bring the patient to the city where they can receive medical attention. While we were in Hitadipa a medical flight was requested for a man who had been shot in the foot with an arrow which had to be surgically removed.

Difficult but Rewarding

Living in a developing country is not all easy going. To really work with the people one needs to understand not only the language but also the culture of the people. In Western society we take certain things for granted and value things differently than other cultures do. Having only visited for a short time I cannot claim to understand much of Indonesian or Papuan culture, but it has reinforced the fact that 'our way' is not the only way of doing things.

Life can also be very lonely. There is close contact with the one or two other families on the base, but all other family and friends are distant. Here at home we can choose whether to go out visiting friends, grandparents, etc, but over there that is no option. Phone and email connections are therefore invaluable for keeping up to date with life and issues on the 'home front'.

wake up chrisitans!

It's that time again. In the mail we receive newsletters with the smiling polished faces of political candidates outlining the great things each party is doing for the community, the environment, education, Aboriginal people, the elderly... We know its election time again!

We all react differently to election time. Some of us study the news fastidiously, analyzing each candidate or party's policy and weighing them up, determined to be fully informed and make their vote count! Most of us go with the flow and vote Liberal or Christian Democrats, because that's who everyone else votes for. And some of us leave it till we get to the polling booth and allow those at the booth to convince us which way to vote.

'Since we, who are His children, know what God's will is, do we not have all the more reason to participate in the field of politics than those in the world around us?'¹ As Christians we are called to **Speak out in Australia for God**, also through our vote. God has blessed us with a democracy, a talent as such, and we are to invest in this opportunity for the growth of God's kingdom. How can we make our vote count? By being informed about candidates and parties, and electing those that best promote God's will.

'The Christian Democratic Party (CDP) ... stands for Christian ideals such as putting families first, supporting the traditional family and upholding the value of human life.'

In the previous few elections a relatively new party has shown up on our ballot papers - **The Christian Democratic Party (CDP)**. Though interdenominational, the party stands for Christian ideals such as putting families first, sup-

porting the traditional family and upholding the value of human life.

There are many church members who are unaware of the party or are uninformed about the CDP's policies. In order to remedy this and to help them to make informed votes, the ARCP, CPSA's and SPYSC joined forces to bring the CDP in to speak to Free Reformed voters, on July 25th. Gerard and Madeleine Goiran and Vivian Hill were invited to speak to us as representatives of the CDP. Their main task for the evening, in light of the upcoming election, was to explain the benefits of voting CDP, detail the issues involved with running a small Christian party and ways we as Christians in WA can support the party in promoting godly politics.

Before launching into the subject in focus, Mr. Gerard Goiran expressed excitement at the number of our churches' youth who had shown their interest in our country's affairs by turning up at the meeting - he has never spoken to so many youth at one time about the CDP - and it wasn't even a youth meeting!

This review outlines some of the major issues addressed by the speakers.

How do Christians make their voice heard and promote God's will in Government? The most logical way is to vote faithful Christians into government, where they can make Bible-based decisions. A Christian politician can either represent a Christian party or join another (conservative) party such as the Liberals. However, the advantage of joining a Christian party, such as the CDP, is that the policies of their party align with their own beliefs and God's Word.

Despite the clear Christian values of the CDP, many people feel they waste their vote by giving it to such a minor party, such as the CDP. However, if the CDP candidate is not elected, your vote will flow to the Liberal party at full value (unless your ballot paper specifies otherwise). Therefore, if you vote for CDP and they are unsuccessful, your vote will not be wasted.

do you need a doctor?

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance." Luke 5:31-32

G 'day? How are you?

Pretty good? A bit fluey? Sore throat? Aches and pains? Been better?

We talk about our physical health every now and again. We all have well times and unwell times. If we are unwell, one option is to ignore our illness, hoping whatever it is will go away. Some of us are afraid of doctors, and would rather tell ourselves we're healthy than seek their help. Maybe we're a little sceptical of their ten-minute questioning and scribbled prescriptions. Who's to say they will even work? Or we might face the fact that we are unwell and need help, go to the doctor, receive the appropriate treatment and hopefully get well again.

What we don't often talk about is our spiritual health. How are you spiritually? Well or unwell? Are you doing well without a doctor, standing on your own two feet? If you are sick, what do you do? Do you tell yourself you're healthy because you're afraid or embarrassed to go to the doctor for help? A little wary of being dependent? Or are you constantly in consultation with your doctor, letting Him bring you towards good health?

'Will you let Him heal you?'

Jesus is the ultimate Doctor! He introduces Himself as such to the Pharisees and teachers of the law when they condemn Him for hanging out with tax-collectors. To the Pharisees' minds, they themselves are at the top rung of the holiness ladder, keeping Moses' abundant laws and many extras to a T. Everyone else is less holy than them, depending on how well they obey the Pharisees' laws. At the bottom of this ladder of holiness sit the tax collectors. These guys are the worst - the scum of society, because they show no regard at all for the Pharisees and their laws, they work for the hated Romans and they steal from their own people. No respectable citizen would talk to a tax-collector, let alone enter his home or treat him like a buddy. The correct and holy thing to do with a tax collector is to turn and look the other way.

Our Lord Jesus obviously did the "wrong" thing. He was not too eager to pal up with the posh

teachers or to snub sinners to be seen as holy. Jesus was holy. He is HOLINESS personified, because He is God! Why did Jesus choose to spend time with sinners and not the "upright"? His answer is clear: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance."

Jesus is a Saviour. He is also a Doctor. (The difference between Jesus Christ and your average GP is that Christ is never hurried, never sloppy and never yet has a patient of His perished.) The "healthy" Pharisees did not need a doctor. They were just fine obeying the dots and dashes of the law. To them Jesus was a pest, someone who stole the limelight and their power. Someone who disrupted their idyllic structured world. They would never go to Him for help, and therefore Jesus could not help them.

The tax collectors were a different story. These guys knew they were sick. Many of them were plagued by guilt and searching for a cure since the very first time John the Baptist began his work. Jesus was becoming a renowned Doctor. These people needed Him, came to Him. As a doctor, He did not disappoint them! Jesus spent time with them and helped them to turn around and live a righteous and healthy life with Him! He paid for the sins of this scum of society with his own life! And they were so thrilled that their lives radically changed!

Are you sick or are you healthy? (I'm not asking whether you go to church twice on Sunday.) Maybe you're pretty alright just as you are? Is coming from the right family, hanging out with the right people, conforming to the unwritten Free Reformed code of behaviour and having a squeaky-clean reputation all you need? Or do you desperately need a doctor? (It's never a good look to be desperately in need, is it?)

Maybe something else is stopping you from seeing your Doctor about your illness? Maybe, like me, you have a natural tendency to want to "do it yourself", to make your own way there, rather than ask for help. But what use will pride be to you or me when we're dead? Can we save ourselves? No, because, like me you desperately need that Doctor.

Will you let Him heal you?

Hester Box



But there are pleasures of working in such a country too. One of the most precious experiences I

had in Papua was working with a group of 13-16 year old students, so unashamedly enthusiastic about life and learning. The Western world seems to have become accustomed to changes in technology so that nothing is really 'new', so this was a refreshing change. And I think the most rewarding part of it all would be to witness first hand the progress of Christianity. Mission work often seems distant, something you hear about every now and then, but experiencing a mission-related scene brings it close to home and has left me wondering how I can be more involved in future.

1. Papua, formerly Irian Jaya, is a province of Indonesia, not to be confused with Papua New Guinea which is a different country.
2. When a person died it was assumed that a female, usually related to the deceased, had eaten their spirit, causing their death. Once a witch was identified she was killed in retribution.

Stacey Wagenaar

on the other hand

Dear Editor,

A few Contender issues ago in "On the Other Hand" you wrote about a guy being made fun of and that it was suggested that we are just a sect like the others. I experience something similar at my work. I feel the answer given by Laurence VanDerPlas in the following issue didn't really address my problem. His answer is good, but it seems to me that there is a further question. My question is why are we not a sect? This guy that was hassling me said "why aren't you a sect?" I couldn't really answer it. I said " Well, a sect follows one particular guy who says all these things, (e.g.. claiming to be the chosen one and so on) and sects do extreme things (e.g.. have a mass suicide)."

His answer to that was " Well, so do you. You follow Jesus, he was a guy claiming he was the chosen one, and you do extreme things, maybe not commit mass suicide but I call going to church every Sunday extreme, and not having sex before you are married, that is extreme, so therefore I think you are a sect."

So what can I answer to that? What actually is the difference between us and a sect? It got me thinking anyway, so if you could ask that in the Contender that would be helpful.

Thankyou

Ed Schoof

Question 3 Volume 9 Issue 6:
Is it appropriate to change the Bible itself (e.g. change the parables themselves while translating) in order to make it more culturally understandable?

Dear Editor,

With respect to question 3 (Vol 9 Issue 6), I believe that we do already change the wording of the bible to make it more culturally understandable. I say this because when leafing through the bible, edits can be found such as those in Psalm 7 and Psalm 16 that have changed the wording from the original. For example Ps 16:7 says "... even at night my heart instructs me." Now the term 'heart' is not used in the Hebrew original but the word used by the Israelites is

the word 'kidney'. This is because what we know as the expression with the heart the Israelites used the word kidney, so in order for us to understand, modern translators have now used the word heart in place of the word kidney. Therefore by this little example we can see that the wording of the bible is being changed for it to be more culturally understandable.

Frank Janssen

living out of faith in australia

In my last article, I wrote a few things related to my experience in PNG. Apart from being struck by the great material wealth in Australia again, I was also struck by our enormous spiritual wealth! I couldn't help but constantly think how blessed we are, with so many established churches around us, with such a large communion of saints and with rich, in-depth sermons twice on a Sunday. And I also couldn't help but think how easy it is to get used to it all again, and to take it all for granted, and how easy it is to forget about the lessons that I have learned about serving God.

What do I mean about forgetting the lessons learned? Well, as I already mentioned, we are very established here in Australia. We all have a wealth of Reformed knowledge, and we continue to strive to find more Biblical truths. We continue to refine our Reformed doctrines. This is a great thing, and also something that we MUST do. It is also evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, that more and more we want to serve our Creator and Redeemer in the correct way! It is a rich blessing that we can do this, whether it is through youth club, SPYSC meetings, church attendance, catechism or whatever!

But Satan will attack at whatever opportunity he gets, and even the blessing of a wealth of spiritual knowledge can also cause us to fall. How? Well, to put it in one sentence, we trust in God, but we don't trust in Him alone. It is easy to begin trusting in our own knowledge and efforts, rather than trusting in God alone for our Salvation.

I would like to share with you a section from a book that I have just been reading:

A large American company released the perfect cake mix. It required no additives. No eggs. No sugar. Just mix some water with powder, pop the pan in the oven, and presto! Prepare yourself for a treat.

One problem surfaced. No one purchased the product! Puzzled, the manufacturer conducted surveys, identified the reason, and re-issued the cake with a slight alteration. The instructions now called for the cook to add one egg. Sales sky-rocketed.

Why are we like that? What makes us want to add to what is already complete? Paul asked the same questions. People puzzled him by adding their work to a finished product. Not eggs to a recipe, but requirements for Salvation. Not much, just one simple rule: You must be circumcised to be saved. Such talk ran-

ked the apostle. "We put no confidence in the flesh," he declared (Phil 3:3). "God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith - consisting in Christ alone" (3:9). Paul proclaimed a pure grace: no mixtures, no additives, no alterations. We quickly side with Paul on the circumcision controversy. The whole discussion sounds odd to our Western ears. But is it so strange? We may not teach Christ and circumcision, but how about:

Christ + evangelism: How many people have you led to Christ this year?

Or: Christ + contribution: Are you giving all you can to the church?

Or: Christ + heritage: Were you raised in the church?

Or: Christ + doctrine: When you were baptised, was the water running or still? Deep or shallow? Hot or cold?

Legalism: The theology of Christ + Legalists. Legalists don't dismiss Christ, they trust in Christ a lot. But they don't trust in Christ alone. We're tempted to look at legalism as harmless. After all, legalists look good. They act religious. They promote morality and decency and good living. Is there any harm to their teaching? Paul responds with a resounding "yes!" He reserves a biting tone for the legalist. "Watch out for those who do evil, who are like dogs, who demand to cut the body" (Phil 3:2).

Why so strident against legalists? Why the intensity? Simple. Self salvation makes light of our Salvation. On our own, we're spiritually sunk my friend. As sunk as the "Kursk". Remember the nuclear submarine Kursk, the pride of the Russian army? August 12, 2002 was to be her banner day. 5 high ranking naval officers journeyed to sea, to witness a demonstration of her strength. But then came 2 explosions. Enormous, thundering booms that registered 1.5 - 3.5 on the Richter scale. Something had gone dreadfully wrong. The seven ton vessel immediately took on water and plunged 350 feet to the seabed of the Arctic Ocean. Most of the 118 crew members died instantly. Others were left to spend their last hours in freezing, horrid conditions.

Are we not like the sailors? Are we not equally helpless and hopeless? Like them, we are submerged - not in salt water, but in sin. We need to be lifted up. Not out of the ocean, but out of our failures. "There is no one who does right, no not one" (Rom 3:10). Like

the sailors, we've hit the bottom.

But suppose one of the sailors thought of a solution. Suppose he declared to his fellow crewmen, "I know what to do, let's all press our hands on the ceiling and push. We will shove the sub to the surface." Can you imagine the looks the crew would give him? Push a seven ton vessel up through 350 feet of water? If they said anything, they would tell him to come to his senses. "You don't understand the gravity of the situation. We don't have what it takes to save our lives. We aren't strong enough, we aren't big enough. We don't need muscles, we need a miracle."

Paul's point precisely. Separating you and God is not 350 feet of water, but an insurmountable flood of imperfection and sin. Do you think that by virtue of your moral muscle, you can push this vessel to the surface? Do you think your baptism and Sunday attendance will be enough to save you? Legalists do. They miss the gravity of the problem. By offering to help, they not only make light of sin, they mock God. Who would look at the work of Christ and say, "Great work Jesus? Sorry you couldn't finish it, but I'll take up the slack?"

Dare we question the saving work of God? We're stuck on the bottom of the ocean! We can't see the light of day! Legalism discounts God and in the process makes a mess out of us. To anyone attempting to earn Heaven, Paul asks, "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again...What has happened to your joy?" (Galatians 4:9,15)

Legalism is joyless, because legalism is endless. There is always another class to attend, another person to teach, another mouth to feed. Inmates incarcerated in self-salvation, find work, but never joy. How could they? They never know when they are finished. Legalism leaches joy.

Grace however dispenses peace. The Christian trusts a finished work. Gone are the exertions of law-keeping, gone are the disciplines and asceticism of legalism, gone the anxiety that having done everything, we might not have done enough. God pledges His promised righteousness to those who will stop trying to save themselves.

Grace offers rest, legalism never does. Why then, do we embrace it? "Those who trust in themselves are foolish" (Proverbs 28:26). Why do we trust in ourselves? Why do we add to God's finished work? Might the answer include 'boast'?

Saving yourself is heady stuff. I want everyone to see what I have accomplished. But the truth is, we

don't. If we think we do, we have missed the message. "What is left for us to brag about?" Paul wonders (Rom 3:27). What is there indeed? What have you contributed? "By His doing, you are in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:30). Salvation glorifies the Saviour, not the saved.

Your Salvation show-cases God's mercy. It makes nothing of your effort, but everything of His. "I - yes I alone -am the one who blots out your sins for my Name's sake, and will never think of them again" (Isaiah 43:25). Read also Isaiah 48:9-11.

Can you do anything for your Salvation? No. The work is finished. Can you earn this Salvation? No. Don't dishonour God by trying!! "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor 1:31). It's not about what we do; it's all about what HE does.

'God's people, wherever they are and in whatever circumstance they are in, are being attacked at all times.'

Ok, so what does this all have to do with the title of this article, and with PNG? I think that you already figure it. God's people, wherever they are and in whatever circumstance they are in, are being attacked at all times. In PNG, the churches are also being attacked, but in different ways. While I was there, I realised the importance of having a simple faith in Christ alone. This faith is saving faith, and glorifies God. By living out of such faith, we mirror God's goodness and faithfulness towards us, and we also show others around us His glory. Do we want to be effective tools in God's service? Start by freeing yourself from the trap of self-centeredness and mirror God's grace to others. When we do this, we begin to find out that life is not about me, and we find out that our life is about God's glory; when we begin to live in the joy of faith, then we will automatically desire and keep God's commandments. Then, we will find greater purpose and happiness in our lives. Why? Because we are truly living for our God and Saviour! And finally, when our lives are complete, and when we have throughout the ongoing struggles continued to shine forth God's goodness, His faithfulness, then our loving Father will greet us with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

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