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still instructive parallels. King Ahab ruled over the northern kingdom and “did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him” (1 Kg 16:30). He married a foreign wife who led him to idolatry and Baal worship. Idolatry and immorality are bad enough for any child of God, but when those sins are committed by a leader, the effects are compounded. Indeed, Ahab is later rebuked because he “made Israel to sin” (1 Kg 21:22), that is, he led the people of God to follow him into idolatry and immorality.

But following an immoral leader on their sinful path is not even the worst effect of a leader’s failure; even worse is when the fall of a trusted and beloved leader cripples the faith of those under his care. The fall of a leader often shakes the confidence of others, not only in the man and his teaching, but even worse it can shake their confidence in God. Character matters because it is the best safeguard (apart from the spirit of God) against a fall from grace and the ensuing ripples of destruction.

(5) *Character matters for officers because rules are not enough.* This past year we have assembled a “Policy and Procedure Manual” for our church that is full of helpful guidelines and rules to keep us focused on our mission and acting out of our core commitments. But no rule or policy

– no matter how well written – can replace character. Character is the irreplaceable bastion that will keep us “above reproach” (1 Tim 3:2). I have written before on the insufficiency of the so-called “Billy Graham Rule” because a rule by itself cannot prevent us from sinning. I am all for right boundaries and safeguards to lead us not into temptation, but if safeguards were all that we needed to keep from sinning then why didn’t God just give us the perfect policy manual?!

For example, our deacons count and process the tithes and offerings each Sunday after church, and they have adopted as a best practice having two of them in the room for the count. This is a good rule because even good deacons can be tempted to steal; but is the rule enough to ensure that the eighth commandment will never be broken in that office? None of us is that naive, and that is why, in addition to good rules, we need character more than anything else.

I could go on, but I am out of space. As we nominate officers, let us keep our eyes on the ball. May character reign as king, if not in our nation, than at least in our churches.

The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Jim Curtis

As we wrap up our evening series in 1 Kings, the inevitable question is floating around: *What’s next?* We like to alternate Testaments in preaching series with the morning service, so when we realized Romans would still be going on as we end 1 Kings, I dropped hints that we could simply dive into 2 Kings. The hint? An outline of the book which perfectly fit the remainder of our time in Romans in the morning, nicely laid on Pastor Sean’s desk. Of course, he was not opposed. I was just prepared, like a little boy over preparing his ask for a puppy.

Those who have joined us for 1 Kings in the evening know of my love not only for Old Testament history, but for 1 Kings specifically. And I am here to tell you: 1 Kings ain’t got nothin’ on 2 Kings. Let me give you two brief reasons why I am so excited to dive in.

First, the book of 2 Kings has all of the best *prophets*. True, we begin with Elijah leaving the scene... but on chariots of fire! Meanwhile, a *double* portion of the spirit of Elijah is left upon Elisha. If you

loved Elijah, how much more will you love Elisha! Many ministers and commentators have rightly noted the parallels between Elijah-Elisha in the Old Testament with John-Jesus in the New Testament. Bears, axe heads, and stews await! And in them, the protection, provision, and potency of God. Not only that, though, 2 Kings is the historical backdrop to Isaiah, whom we will meet again in chapters 19 and 20.

Second, the book of 2 Kings has all of the best *kings*. If I were to ask you to name two or three kings from the Old Testament after Solomon, I would be surprised if any king from 1 Kings would be named other than Ahab. But in 2 Kings, we meet the good (Hezekiah, Josiah), the bad (Jehu, Ahaz), and the ugly (Manasseh, Zedekiah). The continued descent into idolatry gives these kings room in our memory, as their evils acts are significantly worse than before. Yet, in such significant evil, God provides those who do good to show his mercy and grace are still present.

Yet, I suspect I have not convinced anyone new with these two reasons individually to come to evening service. But consider the sum total of them both: our God continues to reach out to a sinful people, offering mercy by his prophets and telling of a future king who will not only reunite the kingdom, but rule over the nations. 2 Kings uniquely highlights the ordinary nature of sin and the extraordinary grace of God. Is there anything more worth your time and attention?

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
March 1	Romans 5:6-11	
March 8	Romans 5:12-21	2 Kings 1
March 15	Romans 6:1-14	2 Kings 2
March 22	Romans 6:15-23	2 Kings 3
March 29	Romans 7:1-6	2 Kings 4:1-37
April 5	Romans 7:7-12	
April 12	Romans 7:13-25	2 Kings 4:38-44
April 19	Romans 8:1-11	2 Kings 5
April 26	Romans 8:12-17	2 Kings 6:1-23

Together for the Gospel

By Micaiah Liner

It would seem that one of the ever-present yearnings of the Christian heart is that there would be greater unity within the body of Christ. Oftentimes we are painfully aware of divisions among believers and churches, even within the same denomination. Our hearts grieve, and we long for a better way. Our prayers often reflect this when we ask that God would bring peace and unity amongst our churches. And so, it is a very special thing when those prayers are accompanied with opportunities to see such a thing happen.

Over the past year, it has been one of my great joys in ministry to develop relationships with Rev. Brandon Wilcox at Trinity Presbyterian and Elliot Mattix at Arden Presbyterian – both are leaders in their church’s youth ministries. As we have had chances to get to know each other, there has also been a growing desire to see our churches, and particularly our youth ministries, be able to enjoy fellowship and grow together in the Lord.

This summer there will be a wonderful opportunity for this to take place. June 16th-18th, the youth ministry at CRPC (high school and middle school) will be joining Trinity and Arden for a mini-conference called Theological Foundations for Youth (or TFY, for those who like acronyms). This 3-day event will have lessons geared toward students, a time of lunch together, and group games.

Last summer we had a joint youth event with these same churches—a massive game of Ultimate Frisbee. Before the festivities began, there was a brief devotional given by Elliott (Arden’s youth leader). As our very large group was circled around, he read from Psalm 133, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” He then encouraged us all to view even a morning of Ultimate Frisbee as a way that God can knit our hearts together.

This is the desire for these kinds of cross-congregational events—that God would indeed knit our hearts together, and that our students would see God at work in the lives of many students throughout this region. What a great encouragement this is for us all: God is building his church, and we are a part of something big.

Ways to pray:

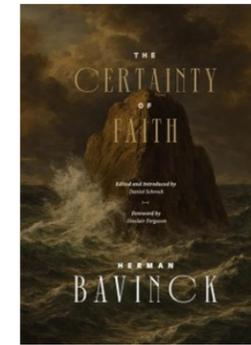
- Pray that our students would be encouraged in their faith, as they are reminded that they are not alone. God is at work in the hearts of young people throughout Asheville and the surrounding area.
- Pray that the result would be a deeper sense of unity and love for our sister churches—and that we would champion one another in the good work of Gospel ministry being accomplished in each congregation.

If you have a middle school or high school student, encourage them to attend TFY. They will have a ton of fun, and most importantly they will be built up in their faith.

Thank you for your continual prayers. What a joy it is to serve our church in this area of Youth Ministry.

The Certainty of Faith —Review

By David Livernois



“I believe, Lord help my unbelief.” These words from Mark 9:24 demonstrate an honest self-assessment by an earnest believer which many of us can relate to. But does this mean that true certainty of faith will always be just beyond one’s grasp? Sadly, in our day and age some have even championed doubt in the Christian life as a badge of authenticity. James however says one

who doubts is like a wave of the sea (Jas 1:6). Yet is it actually possible for a believer to be certain of their salvation and all its benefits without presuming on God’s grace? And is certainty gained by seeking certainty itself? These questions and more regarding the nature and confidence of the Christian faith are masterfully treated in Herman Bavinck’s *The Certainty of Faith*.

First published in 1901, this new translation from the original Dutch, recently published by Westminster Seminary Press, is just as timely in our own age of skepticism and doubt as it was Bavinck’s. In addition to the welcome voice of truth pointedly yet pastorally proclaimed on every page, this book also serves as a wonderful first introduction to Bavinck’s thought and writing if you have yet to read any of his works, or have simply not known where to start. Bavinck is an eminent scholar in the Reformed tradition with a pastor’s heart and prolific pen. Anecdotally, I have even heard his name playfully yet affectionally mentioned on the Charlotte campus of Reformed Theological Seminary as “the patron saint of RTS.” Not including the excellent introduction by Daniel Shock (which helpfully introduces you not only to the work itself but to Bavinck, the 19th century theologian) the book is only 102 pages, divided into three chapters. As such, it can be easily read from cover to cover in a short span of time, even for slow readers like me. That said, it is also a book any reader will likely find themselves returning to again and again to ponder afresh the plain yet profound insights therein; insights I found fortifying to my faith and uplifting to my soul.

A feature I found especially enlightening was Bavinck’s clear and concise history of how the doctrine of assurance has been taught outside the Reformed tradition, and how our tradition has uniquely sought to present the beauty and power of Biblical assurance rightly understood. In fact, our own *Westminster Confession of Faith* encourages us to seek the spiritual vitality that springs from the root of the certainty of faith (WCF 18.3). I believe this book can serve as a great resource toward that end. In conclusion, I did find a few sections to be a bit like hiking a steep incline over somewhat challenging terrain. Yet (as is often the case when hiking), pressing ahead I soon came to clearings where the view opened to breathtaking vistas; views from which Bavinck shows us the immense grace and infinite glory of God waiting to be seen.

THE SALTSHAKER

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Office: 828-253-6578—Email: office@covenantreformed.net—Website: www.covenantreformed.net

Why Character Matters

By Rev. Sean McCann

When Peggy Noonan entitled her biography of Ronald Reagan, *When Character Was King*, did she mean to imply that we live in a day when character is no longer king? Is our day one of vice and pragmatism wherein the traits of virtue and character are nothing but fragments of a bygone era? Might we ever recover a day when we can speak of character in the present tense: Now Character Is King? The winds and currents of culture may be ever-changing in their valuation of character, but for the church and her leaders, character stands firm as the immovable object and reigns always as king.

We are in a season of officer nominations in our church, and in preparation I have taught on the importance of character for our leaders. In those teachings, I aimed to answer the question of *what*, that is, “What is godly character?” We saw that godly character falls under the umbrella of being above reproach and includes a life both full of virtue and free of vice. Today I want to answer a different question, the question of *why*: “Why is character so important for officers in God’s church?” Why can’t we just focus on gifts and skills, and let policy and procedure do the rest? There are many reasons why character is king for church officers, so allow me to enumerate but a few.

(1) *Character matters for officers because God’s leaders represent a holy God.* When Peter instructs the elders of the church, he frames his charge in terms of representative leadership. Jesus is the “chief Shepherd,” and the elders are to “shepherd the flock of God” as under shepherds (1 Pet 5:2-4). In this delegated role, the elders do not supplant their chief Shepherd, rather they are to model their character and ministry after him. In this role, the officers of Christ’s church take seriously the command of the Lord: “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16; cf. Lev 11:44).

(2) *Character matters for officers because God’s leaders must be found trustworthy in their charge to steward that which has been entrusted to them.* “Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:2). Leadership in Christ’s church is not ownership; it is stewardship. Under the reign of King Jesus in heaven,

our earthly leaders are entrusted (for a time) with the care of the things of God. Leaders have been entrusted with God’s flock (“Feed my lambs” – John 21:15), with the deposit of faith (“guard the deposit entrusted to you” – 1 Tim 1:20), and even the very souls of their members (“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give account” – Heb 13:17). In each of these tasks the steward-leader does not act for himself, or even for those under his care, but for the Lord and owner to whom he must one day give account. The gifts and skills of a leader can be employed for different ends (whether good or bad), but it is trustworthiness and faithfulness that ensures that a man’s gifts are employed in the service of God alone.

(3) *Character matters for officers because God’s leaders are to be examples of how to live.* To borrow from a colloquial saying, anyone can talk the talk, but leaders must walk the walk. We are told in Hebrews to “Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.” To put it bluntly, it does not matter what officers say if their walk does not accord with their words. The Apostle Peter was found guilty of this, as reported by Paul in Galatians. Peter had preached on the full inclusion of the Gentiles, but while dining in Antioch he was found to have separated from the Gentiles to eat only with the Jews. In so doing, not only did his life not match the profession of his gospel, but he also diverted others from the path: “And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy” (Gal 3:11). Character matters in our officers because their way of life (even more than their words) are to serve as examples to the rest of us of how to live.

(4) *Character matters for officers because the ripples of a leader’s failure spread far and wide.* In our Sunday evening sermon series in 1 Kings, we have spent the last few months following the kingship of Ahab. And while the leadership of Old Testament kings is certainly not a one-to-one correlation with the leadership of New Testament church officers, there are

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March – April

Upcoming Events

For additional information about any of these events, please refer to our website (covenantreformed.net), or contact the church office at 828-253-6578; office@covenantreformed.net.

The Lord’s Supper

Please prepare your hearts in advance to take of the sacrament together.

Morning Worship:
March 1, 15, April 5, 19

Evening Worship
March 29, April 3 (Good Friday)

Shepherding Groups:

March 1

High School Youth Retreat

March 6 - 8

Men’s Second Breakfast

March 14, April 11

Good Friday Service

April 3

Weekly Events

Sunday:
Sunday School 9:30 am
Morning Worship 10:45 am
Evening Worship 6:00 pm Except on 1st Sunday

Wednesday Nights 6:00 pm

Bible Study

For Men:
ROMEOS 7:30 am Every Thursday
(Retired Old Men Eating Out)
at Cornerstone Restaurant
Norm Bomer’s Home 7:00 pm 1st & 3rd Thursdays

For Women:
Carol Esther Belz’s Home 9:30 am Every Tuesday
Mark Bible Study at Church 10:00 am Every Tuesday
6:30 pm Every Tuesday

Watering Seeds Podcast

Be sure to check out our church’s weekly podcast, *Watering Seeds*. Each week our pastors review, discuss, and apply the previous Sunday’s sermon. You can find the podcast on any major podcast platform, such as Anchor, Spotify, or Apple Podcast, by searching for our church name or the title, “Watering Seeds,” or by scanning the following QR code:

