The Sketch of a Gospel Servant

IF YOU WERE TO SKETCH a model for a gospel minister, what would it be like? Perhaps we would include all the best traits of a minister—a dynamic preacher, a personable pastor, a perfect individual. But let’s pause for a moment and consider the sketch of a gospel servant which emerges from Romans 1:1–17. Paul commends himself as a servant of the gospel—not out of hubris, but humility. And the first thing to note about this sketch is a servant kneeling in his submissiveness to Christ. He is a servant of Jesus Christ (v. 1). He serves God with his spirit in the gospel of God’s Son (v. 9). He serves others by being their debtor in preaching the gospel (v. 14). Written above this kneeling servant is an important word—SENT. He is called to be an apostle—a sent one (v. 1). This call is what sustains gospel servants through good times and bad. Without that call and sending of God, they lack the bedrock of their ministry. As this sketch is filled out, we see that gospel servants are given the specific task of preaching the gospel of God (v. 1). Such a gospel servant must not preach his own gospel, a self-help gospel, an entertaining gospel, or a prosperity gospel, but the gospel of God. This is the great need of the church today: servants who are called to preach the pure gospel of God.

In this sketch as the gospel servant kneels in submission, his hands are clasped and his gaze is heavenward in prayer. It is thankful prayer: “First, I thank my God” (v. 8). He thanks God for the faith of His people, for those who encourage. But he is also thankful for even crusty and critical Christians, who are objects of the Father’s love and grace and beautifying work. He also intercedes for his flock: “without ceasing…[to] make mention of you always in my prayers” (v. 9). And he asks for prayer for himself, knowing his own desires, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities (v. 10).

Even as his hands are clasped in prayer, those hands are opened towards others, demonstrating a selfless heart for others, seeking the growth and mutual comfort of one another’s faith (vv. 12–14). Such a servant is eager to preach the gospel—to show the selfless character of Christ Himself.

The gospel servant also has a book in front of him, the Word of God, and he is saturated with that Word through daily devotion and study so that he can show Jesus as the sum and substance of the gospel (vv. 2–4). The final characteristic of a gospel servant is shamelessness regarding the gospel (vv. 16–17). He will shamelessly point out the glories of Jesus Christ, the devastation of sin, the difficulty and duties of the Christian life, the glory of the Father’s adoption, the beauty of the Spirit’s ministry in creation and the Christian. The gospel is the foundation and power of his life. He must bring the powerful message from his Master that burns deep within his soul—sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. In the final analysis, this is a sketch of none other than Jesus Christ, the Servant of the Lord who continues to build His church by fitting men to minister in this way. Glory be to Him!
Library News

IN THE SECOND HALF OF 2013, the library received donations from two former pastors, a university professor, and a medical doctor. The donors wished that any of the books which the library already had in its collection should then be given to the students at no charge. Consequently, exam week became a little brighter for the students as about two thousand books were given away. The librarians made it a festive time by serving hot cider and cookies. It was a happy day for all!

If you would like to contribute to the library’s collection by purchasing a special book that has been requested by faculty or students, consider purchasing one of the following on the library’s wish list:

• **Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity** / InterVarsity Press, $450
• **A Late Fifteenth-Century Dominical Sermon Cycle** / Stephen Morrison, Oxford, 2012, $110
• **Luther’s Correspondence, 2 v.** / Preserved Smith, Wipf & Stock, 2006, republished from 1913 edition, $100
• **Sacred History: Uses of the Christian Past in the Renaissance World** / Van Liere, Katherine Elliot, Simon Ditchfield, and Howard Louthan, eds., Oxford, 2012, $125
• **The Philosophical and Theological Treatises of William Ames** / Edited and translated by Lee W. Gibbs, Edwin Mellen Press, 2013, $120

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Building Expansion Update

I HAVE BEEN ENJOYING READING Dr. Bilkes’s book, *Memoirs of the Way Home*, while watching the construction of our seminary expansion. Ezra 3 informs us that one of the first projects of the people who returned from exile was to build the altar to the God of Israel. They began their building project with prayer and offerings to the Lord. Upon the completion of their project, they dedicated this house of God with joy and offered worship according to the Book of Moses.

Our project is certainly not the rebuilding of a ruined temple, but it is a project involving much prayer from the planning stages to the present. *We look forward to a time of worship and thanksgiving with the dedication of the new facilities on May 9, 2014, which coincides with our graduation. Please circle this special day on your calendar and join us!*

The people of Israel, having returned to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem, experienced serious obstacles and the amazing providences of God that removed every barrier, leading to successful completion. Similarly, we are amazed by the Lord’s wonderful provisions. The project is proceeding well. Our current prayer petitions are that the Lord would keep the construction crews safe in this wintery weather and that He will provide the necessary financial resources to finish the project without debt. We are humbled here by the gifts that are coming from you. Eighty-seven percent of the anticipated cost of completing the expansion has already been pledged or given. That is more than $3 million! We are praying for the Lord to provide the remaining $450,000, which includes what is needed for furnishing, technologies, and building contingencies before the dedication service.

The enemies of Israel were amazed with the completion of the rebuilding of the temple and walls of Jerusalem. They had to conclude that this work was wrought of the God of Israel. We trust that our project is also a work of our Lord and that He, through His people, will bring it to completion for many years of service training called men for ministry, all for His glory.

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— LAURA MUSTAFA

— JOEL BEEKE & HENK KLEYN
Registrar Update

PERHAPS THE MOST COMMON QUESTION asked me during my time as registrar at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary is, “How many students attend PRTS?” This question, as simple as it may sound, can be answered in a number of ways. I am often left guessing if the person desires to know the on-campus student number, the degree-seeking student number, or the total number of PRTS students, including online students and non-degree-seeking students. Furthermore, some may wish to know how the current student enrollment compares to previous years.

To clarify this seeming conundrum, the following graph shows the growth of PRTS enrollment over the past 18 academic years (beginning with 1995–1996 when only four students were enrolled in classes). The definition of a student used here is “enrolled for credit in at least one class” within a given academic year. We praise God for the steady enrollment at PRTS, and pray that our students and graduates may prove to be acceptable workers in the kingdom of God!

— JONATHON BEEKE

Faculty Itineraries & Publications

DR. MICHAEL BARRETT | Itinerary:
December 29: Grand Rapids: Reformed Presbyterian Church
January 5: Metamora, Michigan: Pilgrim Presbyterian Church
January 12: Chatham, Ontario: Free Reformed Church
January 26: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church (afternoon)
February 9: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church (afternoon)
March 2: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church (evening)
March 12: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church (morning prayer service)
March 30: London, Ontario: Free Reformed Church
April 6: Hull, Iowa: Heritage Reformed Church
April 25–27: British Columbia: Fraser Valley Bible Conference
May 4: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church (afternoon & evening)

Writing Project:
King James Version Study Bible

DR. JOEL BEEKE | Itinerary:
February 3–11: Northern Ireland itinerary, including Puritan Conference
March 2–4: Grand Rapids: Ministerial Conference, Grace Immanuel Reformed Baptist Church
March 11–13: Greenville, So. Carolina: Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Conference
March 21–23: Atlanta, Georgia: Midway Presbyterian Church Conference
April 1–3: Gilbert, Arizona: Preacher at General Assembly of ARBCA (Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America)
April 6: Bradenton, Florida: Reformed Fellowship

Recent Publications:
Amigo e Amantes: Como Cultivar a Amizade e a Intimidade No Casamento [Portuguese translation of Friends and Lovers: Cultivating Companionship and Intimacy in Marriage] (Vida Nova).
Building on the Rock, with Diana Kley, 5 volume set translated and published in German in Oerlinghausen.


DR. GERALD BILKES | Itinerary:
January 12: Jordan, Ontario: Heritage Reformed Church
February 16: Fenwick, Ontario: Free Reformed Church
March 30: Hamilton, Ontario: Free Reformed Church
April 27: Hamilton Ontario: Free Reformed Church

Writing Projects:
King James Version Study Bible (editing New Testament)
Miracles of Christ
The Book of Esther

REV. MARK KELDERMAN | Itinerary:
January 12: Bradenton, Florida: Reformed Fellowship
February 2: Burgessville, Ontario: Heritage Reformed Church
February 9 and 16: Dorr, Michigan: New Hope Reformed
February 23: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church
March 9: Bradenton, Florida: Reformed Fellowship
March 23: Jordan, Ontario: Heritage Reformed Church
April 1–4: HRC Synod
April 6: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church
April 27: Grand Rapids: Heritage Reformed Church

DR. DAVID MURRAY | Itinerary:
January 19: Monarch, Alberta: Free Reformed Church
February 8: Hudsonville, Michigan: RCA Day Conference
March 13–15: Orlando, Florida: Ligonier National Conference
February 8: Hudsonville, Michigan: RCA Church Planters Conference

Projects:
Christians Get Depressed Too films
Positive Faith

DR. WILLIAM VANDOODEWAARD | Writing Projects:
The Quest for the Historical Adam (RHB)
1 & 2 Peter, Welwyn Commentary Series (Evangelical Press)
“The Marrow Controversy” in Diversity and Controversy in the Reformed World of the Eighteenth Century (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht)
“The Church of Scotland” in The Jonathan Edwards Encyclopedia (Yale)
Please join us for a special evening on May 9, 2014 (7:30 p.m.) at PRTS for a combined evening of commencement exercises for our graduates as we complete our 20th year, together with the dedication of our new seminary addition. Rev. Ian Hamilton will be our graduation speaker and Dr. Joel Beeke our dedication speaker. Join us also for fellowship and refreshments.

I would like to thank every person and organization who has prayed for and supported PRTS over the last year. May the Lord richly bless you in Christ Jesus! With warmest regards,

Chris Hanna

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### PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**2965 Leonard Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525**  
Tel: 616-977-0599 • Fax: 616-855-5740  
E-mail: info@puritanseminary.org • Web: www.puritanseminary.org  
Seminary EIN: 20-2394341 • Foundation EIN: 20-2394946

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### PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY FINANCIAL REPORT

For period 8/1/13–12/31/13

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<th>Income</th>
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<th>Annual Budget</th>
<th>Variance Actual</th>
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<td>HRC/FRC</td>
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<td>Church Support</td>
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<table>
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<th>Expenses</th>
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<td>$1,926,361</td>
<td>$(1,037,541)</td>
<td>46%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Net Income**  
$204,959

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**YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE!**

- I would like to financially support PRTS by giving $_____, designated for:
  - Building Expansion Fund
  - Pressing Operational Needs
  - Scholarship Fund
  - PRTS Foundation
  - Puritan Resource Center
- I would like to enroll in the monthly giving program and give $____ per month.
- I am enclosing $20 for a 2014 subscription to *Puritan Reformed Journal*.
- Send me a free copy of *Prepared by Grace for Grace: The Puritans on God’s Ordinary Way of Leading Sinners to Christ* by Joel Beeke and Paul Smalley.

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  - Card # ________________________
  - Exp. Date __/____
  - Security Code ________________________
- Send me a free copy of *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (for donations of $100 or more).
- Send me a copy of the
  - PRTS promotional DVD
  - PRTS 2012–2014 catalog

**Name**

**Address**

**City/State/Zip**

**Phone**

**e-mail**

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2965 Leonard Street, NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49525

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- Beneficiary’s Bank Swift: MEMIUS33
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