
Rare are the biblical commentaries that provide sound theological instruction. Rarer still are the commentaries that provide sound theological instruction and helpful application to the faith and life of the church today. Even a little of both of these oft-missing ingredients would be enough to recommend a commentary to serious students of scripture. That this volume offers a feast of accurate explanations of the truth of scripture and appropriate applications means that I must highly recommend it to the reader.

Living up to its title as a practical commentary the book provides much doctrinal instruction. This is necessary because sound doctrine is the basis for the practice of believing and doing. Rev. Langerak’s teaching is sound because he derives his teaching from the scriptures. The doctrine that he teaches is truly apostolic, a holding fast to and a passing down of the apostles’ doctrine as recorded in the New Testament and confessed by the true church of Jesus Christ in every age. To read this book then is to sit at the feet of the apostles. What do the apostles say about the relationship between the Old and New Testament? What do the apostles say about spiritual gifts? What do the apostles say about the unity of the church? What do the apostles have to say about the instituted church? What about love, the resurrection of the body, and various elements of public worship (such as who should speak in the worship service, and whether offerings should be taken)? These are just some of the biblical truths that Rev. Langerak carefully sets forth from the text of scripture.

What false doctrines did the apostle Paul refute in this epistle, and how does his handling of them apply to the church’s life today? Rev. Langerak does not force his polemics, and therefore does not bring up errors merely because he has an ax to grind. He brings up the errors where they are appropriate because the particular passage he is explaining condemns the error, even if the error may be relatively new. Rev. Langerak shows that it is not he, but the Holy Spirit and the apostle Paul, who
condemn dispensationalism, postmillennialism, conditionalism in the covenant, common grace, evolutionism, and a variety of other false doctrines.

But to be a successful practical commentary on walking in the way of love, Rev. Langerak must provide helpful applications to the church’s faith and life. The book is a resounding success. There are many rich applications in this book to family life, school life, work life, and to church life. You may be surprised to find that Rev. Langerak teaches that true love (which is not the false love touted by Rob Bell) really does win. He applies this beautifully to marriage, not only calling husbands and wives to stay married (as if that exhausts the Christian’s calling in marriage), but to live in love for each other (see especially chapter 18). Stirring is Rev. Langerak’s call to the believer to recognize the beauty of love, personifying love as the most beautiful of women, so that the believer will live in that love. Chapter 31 is basically a profound explanation of the so-called Reformed world-and-life.

Probably the most moving applications in the book are the words of comfort that Rev. Langerak speaks to the believer’s heart. Rev. Langerak believes in salvation by God’s sovereign grace alone. This truth is precious to him, and it is evident that he is committed to preaching this truth to the congregation of Crete PR Church (these chapters are based on a series of sermons that Rev. Langerak preached to the congregation). He clearly understands that without this truth he would have no truth and no comfort to bring to God’s people in his preaching or writing. But because of his conviction of the certainty of salvation by sovereign grace (any other kind of salvation is necessarily uncertain) Rev. Langerak is able drive to home the assurance of salvation in variety of powerful ways. I quote one brief section (my favorite) as an example of Rev. Langerak’s skill in this regard. Before I give the quotation I note that it is from a chapter entitled “Nike.” I note this as an example of how fresh and attention-grabbing (in a good sense) Rev. Langerak is in his exposition of scripture. Imagine how eager the young people of the congregation must have been to hear an explanation of why the sermon title is the brand name of a well-known shoe company! But now the comforting quotation:
The chapter title is the Greek word for victory: nike. It is pronounced nee-kay. Nike means victory, and victory is winning.

Love wins. That is what love does. That is what the Bible says about love in the Song of Songs, the greatest song ever written, the song on love. “Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song 8:6). This is the Old Testament parallel to the apostle’s teaching in his ode to love in 1 Corinthians 13, where he says in verse 13 that love abides. Love abides through the fall, through all of history, through the cross, through all sins, through death and the grave, through the end of the world, and through all the endless years of eternity (emphasis added). God will never tire of his people in eternity. Love abides.

Abiding, love wins. Nike.

Non-Protestant Reformed readers may find some subjects Rev. Langerak references to be unfamiliar. They will almost certainly find sections that challenge their beliefs. Perhaps they will find Rev. Langerak’s tone off-putting in some instances. But the challenge for them will be to examine whether Rev. Langerak has accurately explained what the Spirit says to the churches. And if he has, regardless of tone, they must subject themselves and their beliefs to the word of God.

Protestant Reformed readers may also find that they do not agree with or even appreciate everything Rev. Langerak has to say. He does not shy from making sharp (some might say controversial) applications. He speaks with the conviction that he is expounding the truth of scripture and not bringing merely his own opinion. In some instances the reader may disagree. For example, I anticipate that some will challenge some of the things that he has to say about NAPARC. But let such a reader yet be thankful for this commentary for its stimulating instruction in doctrine and life and that overall the teachings of this book are in harmony with the “faith once delivered to the saints.” And let the focus not be on a few
areas of disagreement but on the overall message to believe with all of one’s heart in Jesus Christ and so “walk in the way of love.”