"He is Risen." Down through the ages, the holy message of Easter comes to us, renewing the glorious promise of life eternal. Church services on Easter Sunday reverently, joyously express the heart-lifting wonder and beauty of the Day. As you worship in your church, with your loved ones, your friends and neighbors, may the blessings, the spiritual radiance of Easter be yours.
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Christ's Suffering and Ours—Why?

In this topic assigned to me there can be no doubt as to the meaning of the individual parts it contains. Surely it is abundantly plain, first of all, what the suffering of Christ is. The Scriptures teach very plainly many things in regard to that suffering as duration, manner, purpose, etc. Surely it is very clear as to the essence of that suffering. More than once we are taught that the essence of that suffering is His being subjected to the wrath of God upon sin. Himself without sin, being like unto us in all things excepted, He nevertheless suffered God's wrath upon sin in behalf of His people. He suffered for our sins (Rom. 6:10; 8:3), to our justification (Rom. 8:32ff). That the suffering of Christ, therefore, is a ransom, is redeeming, is the basis for our justification before God, apart from which justification is forever impossible (Rom. 8:3, 4; Heb. 9:26), need not be further discussed. Indeed this is the very gospel of our salvation.

Nor need we spend much time discussing the suffering as it is "ours" in the topic. Surely this does not refer exclusively to suffering as we have that in common and in general with all men. There is, of course, in this vale of tears, suffering of every degree and common to all men. But I take it, because of the "why" that this is not referred to exclusively or mainly in the topic. Were such the case, the "why" could easily be answered. Then all suffering is the result of sin and is the manifestation of the wrath of God upon sin, always working to the end of the wages of sin: death. But let us agree on this: the suffering of US is the suffering of the people of God in distinction from all others. That suffering is, in a way, peculiar to them only. Not, it is true, as to the manner of suffering, but from the viewpoint of its being, exactly "our" suffering.

Finally, thru the conjunction "and" the sufferings of Christ and of the Christians are somehow related. These two sufferings belong together. The character differs, of course. Our suffering is never redemptive; nor is it ever punitive. Thru the vicarious suffering of the Mediator, all punishment upon the people of God is clean gone forever. We ARE justified before God thru the death of His Son and there is no condemnation for them that are in Him. Therefore our suffering is often spoken of as "with" Christ (Rom. 8:17) or as partaking of His suffering (I Pet. 4:13). Consequently the suffering of one member becomes, thru their unity in
Christ, suffering for all the members (I Cor. 12:26) and is ever conceived of as the portion of the called, of short duration and as the way to glory (I Pet. 5:10; Rom. 8:18).

In view of the above we can pinpoint the suffering of "us" to that suffering caused us by the powers of darkness, that did not will Christ nor will ever condone the servant, who is not more than the Master. It is the suffering evoked by Christ revealed in us; a suffering for well-doing (I Pet. 2:20); suffering shame for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41).

Thus the question WHY means: where-as Christ suffered in our stead, removing the guilt and so the punishment of sin; whereas, moreover, He perfectly accomplished His purpose and therefore received all dominion over all things and so IS able to prevent all unjust suffering of His own at the hand of the wicked—why must the Christian still suffer? If He is King over all, and He is, cannot He prevent the suffering of His servants?

In answer to those questions we consider the following facts:

First of all our sufferings and adversities of this present life nor our suffering at the hand of malicious powers of darkness are ever to be conceived of as an imbalance of dualism between Christ's power and ability to avert evil on the one hand and the raging of powers of evil on the other. We do not suffer because Christ cannot prevent it. His is all the power and dominion in heaven, earth and hell. That is more than saying that His is a greater power than all opposition. The powers of darkness as author of the suffering of the people of God are never independent of His rule. Without Him they cannot as much as move. All suffering is according to His directive rule. Christ's dominion is absolute, so that whatever comes to pass, also our suffering, is AS it is because He sovereignly so directs, and the forces of evil are but means in His hand to realize the same. His ruling is in all aspects the realization of the counsel of God. And therefore, shall we even approach a correct conception of our suffering, we must hold to the Scriptural view that all our experiences are SENT to us by Him and do not overcome us in spite of His desire to the contrary.

From this it follows that our suffering is, whether we be conscious of it or not, beneficial. The seeking and realizing of our good is ever the aim and result of Christ's care over us and His work is our sure salvation. Then we have the comfort: we are being prepared for glory. The basis of our salvation is the suffering of our Lord; the application, our sanctification He attains thru all our experiences. There is, after our initial conversion, still much dross left in our lives that needs be removed. As gold and silver are purified by fire, our faith is tried, purified and attains the state of being approved, thru the fire of suffering. The usual dross is our worldli-mindedness as, e.g. in respect to our pleasure and amusement. That carnality must go. The Lord sends suffering as a crucible. Thru it we learn that real, abiding joys are never attained in the earthly, but in fellowship with God in Christ.

This surely gives light on the fact that Christ chastises us thru suffering. Never are His people object of His hatred and can it be said that they are suffering because of such hatred. Ever He loves us. Our suffering, when in wayward paths we stray, is not in spite of but because of this love. He chastises those whom He loves.

A little more difficult does our question become when, apparently there is no reason for our suffering, that is, when
there is no direct reason for chastisement. Sometimes in life we are called to suffer when the cause seems to be in our very faithfulness. According to the measure we walk by and in faith the world hates and despises us. Refusal to go along in the way and to places of corruption, evokes ridicule, which can be such keen suffering. Well, how about that phase of our suffering? Is not Christ our King, also then? Could He not either prevent such suffering or openly reward faithfulness? Is, perhaps, this not one case where gracious care fails? Let us look at Phil. 1:29. There we are taught that suffering is a gift to us; it is grace on the par with believing in Christ. Even suffering for the sake of Christ, because the life of Christ reveals itself in our lives, is a gift of grace. It is a privilege to suffer for righteousness sake, and most blessed according to the beatitudes of our Lord. By it we have an assurance of being in the right way. If they hated Him, Who did nought but His Father's will, how comforting the assurance that the same foe hates us for being His!

Finally, understanding full well that our suffering is never meritorious, it is a means whereby Christ prepares us to receive our place in glory so as to realize the Word, that we suffer with Him in order to be glorified together. This is, in other words, nothing else than God's way of readying us for our place in Christ's body in perfection. In view of that, how true the words of Paul that "the suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared to the glory to be revealed to us." Therefore let us remember and be comforted by the assurance of the word, that of grace God deems us worthy to suffer for the cause and Kingdom of His Son for to this is adhered the promise, that presently we shall reign with Him forever (II Tim. 2:12).

H.H.K.
All shook up?

If you are, compliment yourself for being in the majority, for by far the greater part of the world's population consists of faint-hearted, timorous souls who scamper for any imagined safety at the sight of their own shadow! Even the briefest of introspection will uncover the fact that as individuals and as nations we have developed a giant "fear complex" such as never before graced a psychiatrist's case history book.

We have fears of Russia, of possible unemployment, of nuclear fallout, fear of social disapproval, fear of not keeping up with the Joneses (who are also in fear of not keeping up with us). We have fears of high places, of low places, of cops, of robbers, and now even a fear of fear.

We are quite obviously "all shook up" with fear.

To our great disgrace, we, the church, supposedly the children of the King, are so steeped in these popular fears that an observer could conclude that our faith exists only in fiction.

We seem to have forgotten that all things are blessings to His church. We seem to have lost the vision of Christ reigning in omnipotence in glory and having all powers in heaven and earth under His control. And even more, we seem to disregard His promise to use both this omnipotent power and the entire universe to our advantage!

Imagine: all power . . . all creation . . . for us!

Let us suppose for a minute that your parents owned and controlled the largest corporation in the world, and let's pretend that as a member of this most influential and powerful family, you are put to work in this organization with the promise that no matter what happened to others working around you, you never need worry about finding employment, because as a member of the family which owned the entire organization, your future was secure. If you were promised all these things by devoted parents, would you worry about finding enough to eat? I don't think you would.

Isn't it then to our eternal shame that in spite of the Almighty God's promise that He will never leave us to our own resources; that He will direct every great and small thing to our benefit, isn't it a shame and an insult that we continue in our fears?

It's as if we thought God couldn't live up to His promises. That His control of heaven and earth had slipped a little and now our future was in jeopardy.

By faith we not only can but should walk through this life like princes rather than timorous paupers, having no fears but the "fear" of God which is an expression of adoration and confidence.
We are discussing the advantages of being a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. We observed that if we are to speak of advantages at all, we must look at the matter of our membership from a different point of view than the viewpoint of our life as churches in the world. This is bound to disappoint us and make us wonder if it is at all worth while. For faithfulness to the truth as we as churches confess it inevitably results in much suffering in many different ways. But if we look at the whole question with the eyes of faith, then the answer is sure and definite. We can only be members of these churches, for we believe that we stand in the line of the church of the past, and therefore rest upon the foundation of the heritage of the truth as it was confessed through all time.

This is good to know. The Spirit of Jesus Christ was given to the church on Pentecost. And when that Spirit was poured out upon the church, it revealed to the church the truth concerning Christ and our salvation. One of the most remarkable things in the Bible is the tremendous difference between the disciples before and after Pentecost. Before that great day, they did not understand at all the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were in doubt with serious misconceptions in their minds and hearts. They were, first at least, filled with hopelessness and despair, for the cross had no place in their thinking. But after Pentecost, they suddenly understood it all. They could understand the prophets and how they all pointed to Christ. They saw the cross in a new light and with the clear eyes of faith. Peter could preach a very remarkable sermon which he could not possibly have preached the day before. And the difference was due only to the fact that they had received the Spirit of truth.

That same Spirit has dwelt in the church from that time on. And always that Spirit has given to the people of God and to the church as a whole, insight into the revelation of God so that we can understand it and believe it. And so throughout the ages of New Dispensational history, the church has developed that truth in all its riches. But we know also what that church of the past confessed and believed. We know it all, because that church incorporated what they had learned in their confessions, and have given them to us who are their spiritual children. And when we examine and study these confessions, then we learn that we believe exactly the same as they also believed. We as churches make our confession and it agrees with the confession of the church whenever it lived. This is not the case with other denominations with which we so often come into contact. They have chosen to make their confession somewhat different, some to a greater, some to a lesser degree. But the result is that we know that that same Spirit of Christ which was given to the church so long ago still dwells in our churches and in us to lead us into that same truth. We can trace our
spiritual genealogy back to all the saints who have gone before us. And we may confidently expect that we will grow in a clearer understanding of the Word of God as we apply ourselves with diligence to the task of uncovering the treasures of Scripture.

Thus we have spiritual kinship and fellowship with the church of the past. We are one with the saints of all ages. We stand on the same ground that they did; we fight the same battle that they fought; we have the same convictions of heart and mind as countless saints who have gone before us; we have living contact with the church that is now safely in glory. And it need not surprise us therefore, that we are small—the church has, as a general rule, always been very small. It need not be a matter of concern that our place in the world is gradually taken away from us—this has happened many times before. It need not bother us that we must suffer for the sake of our confession—the church has suffered before and to a greater extent than we do today. It is simply the general rule of history that we should be going through experiences such as we are going through today.

Therefore also it is clear that when we are members of our churches, we are in a spiritual home where we can express the confession that we believe the clearest. It is not difficult for any of us to jump ecclesiastical boundaries and become members of other churches. But to do this simply means that our confession is stifled, for we confess, at least outwardly, the confession of the church of which we are members. Do we want to distort that which we believe by joining a church which has strayed from the truth and which has lived more and more in fellowship with the world?

We believe in our hearts the truth of God's Word. Our churches believe that also. Here we express even by our church membership what lives within us. And then we have peace of heart and mind. The treasures of God's Word are after all those things which abide when Christ shall return and when all that is of this earth shall perish and be destroyed. God's Word shall remain when heaven and earth pass away. And those who cling faithfully and tenaciously to that Word of God will abide with it into everlasting life. To think of the hope of a place in Christ's kingdom; to be assured of the reward of grace which we shall presently receive, is to cause the things which we cherish in this life to fade away into insignificance. To live with this hope and comfort, to cherish it and nourish it, gives peace and joy to our souls which no one can possibly take from us.

But there is one other point in this connection which is worthy of mention. It is here in the spiritual safety of our churches that we can have the conviction that this truth which we have learned to love will also be given to our children. There is not a greater joy in life than for covenant parents to see their children grow up in the fear of God and confess the same truth as we do who have brought them into the world. This cannot be said by those who have forsaken the way of God's Word. As a church of which these people are members drifts gradually but inexorably farther from the harbor of a pure and faithful confession, those on board soon lose sight of the truth of God's Word, and their generations are aimlessly tossed about by the stormy seas of vain and false philosophy and doctrine. Always, the next generation is worse than the last, until the time comes when love of the truth is lost completely from the hearts of generations born into the covenant line.

(Continued on page 8)
April 6, 1958.

On this date, with special commemoration, the children of God will observe a most significant phase of the perfect work of Him, "Who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (Rom. 4:17)

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." (I Cor. 15:20)

Concerning this work of God, Chrysostom, one of the early church fathers, used the following illustration:

"When we pluck down a house, with intent to rebuild it, or repair the ruins of it, we warn the inhabitants out of it, lest they should be soiled with the dust and rubbish, or offended with the noise, and so, for a time, provide some other place for them but, when we have newly trimmed and dressed up the house, then we bring them back to a better habitation. Thus God, when He overturneth this rotten room of our flesh, calleth out the soul for a little time, and lodgeth it with Himself in some corner of His Kingdom, repaireth the imperfections of our bodies against the resurrection, and then, having made them beautiful, yea, glorious and incorruptible, He doth put our souls back again into their acquainted mansions."

Resurrection is transformation! It is the crowning glory of the revelation of the God of our salvation. To it belongs the essence of the things which "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard and which never have arisen in the heart of man but which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

On it rests the hope of faith!

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ; Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." (I Cor. 15:13-15)

No wonder then that this bulwark of the truth has always been the object of attack and ridicule by unbelief and no wonder either, that many errorists make much capital of the doctrine of the resurrection. Almost before the tidings of joy could be known and heralded by the ambassadors of the risen Christ, the enemies had fashioned the lying story that the disciples had stolen the dead corpse from the tomb while the guardsmen were asleep. And ever since, errors with regard to this most fundamental truth have multiplied beyond number.

What then is the simple truth concerning the resurrection of the dead?

Let us tell it briefly as related in our Confessions. First, there is the fact itself. Christ is not here, but He is risen even as He said. Need it be proved? Need it be scientifically demonstrated? Need every inquiry of curious rationalists be satisfied ere this fact can be intelligently accepted? Nay, for faith embraces it as the revelation of the wonder of God. That is sufficient!

What does it mean? Lord's Day 17 of the Catechism expresses the heart of the
matter by pointing to three comforting realities. Bold face in the following quotations are ours:

"First, by His resurrection Christ has **overcome death**, that He might make us partakers of that **righteousness which He had purchased for us** by His death; and secondly, we are also **by His power** raised up to a new life; and lastly, the resurrection of Christ is a **sure pledge** of our blessed resurrection."

For which reason in question and answer 57 of the same catechism there can be added this confession:

"**What comfort doth the resurrection of the body afford thee?**

That not only my soul after this life shall be immediately taken up to Christ its head; but also, that this my body, being **raised by the power of Christ**, shall be reunited with my soul, and made like unto the glorious body of Christ."

From this it is evident that **resurrection is salvation!**

And what is more evident still is that **It is all of Christ, by Christ, through Christ and His glorious power.** Just read and study those Lord’s Days once again!

All of Christ, nothing of self!

That truth we celebrate on Easter!

Such is the comfort of the truth of the resurrection!

The errors that advance ridiculous stories about the resurrection that are contradicted by all the signs and evidences are not the most serious deterrent to the faith of the church. Such fables do not detract from or undermine the comfort of the children of God.

Far more serious are those countless forms of error that on the one hand affirm the reality of the resurrection but at the same time **imply a denial of its power and glory. It is the error of the truth concerning salvation as related to the resurrection truth that misleads and causes many to stumble.** For example let’s ask:

Must this glorious power be accepted by man to be effectual?

Does God in His grace offer to all men without distinction the use of this power if He so wills it?

Is it the intention of God to raise all men unto glory in Christ or is there also a resurrection unto damnation determined by the Most High?

In these questions the references to the power of the resurrection may be substituted by the idea of salvation! **Then the error is easily detected and over-against these we confidently and boldly confess:**

"I believe . . . the third day He rose again . . . the resurrection of the body . . . the life everlasting."

**All through the power of sovereign, unconditional grace!**

**Thanks be to God Who always maketh us to triumph through our Lord Jesus Christ to Whom be glory and dominion forever!**

G. Vanden Berg
Introduction

The record of the second missionary journey comprises a very important phase of the book of Acts. There are several important aspects to this record; but undoubtedly the outstanding aspect of the entire narrative of the second journey of Paul is that of the advance of the gospel into the continent of Europe. And this progress of the gospel must be linked directly to the theme of the book of Acts, namely, that it is a record of the things which Jesus continued to do and to teach after His exaltation. He Who had prophesied to His apostles that they would be witnesses unto Him "in Jerusalem... and to the uttermost parts of the earth," Himself fulfills that prophecy. And that this progress of the gospel is directly a matter of His doing, not only as to the control thereof but also as to its very execution, is certainly emphasized strongly in this section. Let us bear this in mind, and look for indications of this truth as we study the present section.

* * * *

1. Preparations for the Journey, 15:36-40.

A. The Original Plan, vs. 36.

1. The time:
   a. The text says indefinitely, "some days after."
      1) Some days after what?
      2) About how long a time was this?
      3) Why the delay?
   c. In the light of all this, approximately when did Paul go on his second journey?

2. What was Paul's original purpose with respect to this journey?
   a. Whom did he ask to go along? May we assume he meant this?
   b. According to vs. 36, did Paul at this time have any intention of going to Europe, or, in fact, of going beyond the scope of their previous labors?
   c. At the beginning, then, was this intended to be a missionary journey, or a sort of church visitation tour? What accounts for this? Did the apostle have no concern for further mission work?

1. What was the occasion of the contention between Paul and Barnabas? vss. 37, 38?
   a. What does the language indicate concerning Barnabas?
   b. Does the expression concerning Paul's attitude bespeak as strong an attitude, at least at the beginning?
   c. Does the narrative say anything as to a reason on the part of Barnabas? Was there any reason for bias on his part?
   d. Did Paul have a reason for his stand? Was it justifiable?

2. What was the outcome of the contention?
   a. Was the progress of the gospel hindered by the contention?
   b. Were Paul and Barnabas permanently estranged?
   c. Were Paul and John Mark permanently estranged?

3. How is to be judged about this contention?
   a. From a human point of view? Was it sinful or not?
   b. Are there any indications in the passage as to who was right?
   c. Remembering that also this contention falls under the providential direction of the Lord, can anything be said as to His purpose with this disagreement between the two great missionaries?

4. Where did Barnabas and Mark go?
   a. Can this departure for Cyprus be explained?
   b. Is Barnabas heard of again in the book of Acts?

C. Paul's Substitute Plan, vss. 40, 41.

1. Whom did Paul choose in the place of Barnabas?
   a. Is there connection between vs. 34 and vs. 40?
   b. Can you mention any reasons why Silas would be a proper partner for Paul on this second journey, and that too, in distinction from Barnabas?

2. Did Paul carry out his original plan in full?
   a. What part of his itinerary was different?
   b. What was undoubtedly part of the reason for this change of route?
   c. Which churches did they visit first?
      1) Are these churches mentioned earlier in the book?
      2) Were they churches organized by the apostle?
      3) What is meant by "confirming the churches"?

II. To Troas, 16:1-10.

A. Visitation of the Churches in Asia Minor:

1. Timothy.
   a. How is it to be explained that at this time they visit Derbe and Lystra first?
   b. Whom did Paul desire as a companion in his labors?
      1) What was peculiar concerning Timothy's parentage?
      2) What is of special note concerning his mother? vs. 1.
      3) How is it to be explained that Timothy was not circumcised previously? Was his father probably dead at the time of Paul's visit now?
      4) What does it mean that Paul circumcised him "because of the Jews"?
      5) Was this action necessary?
6) Is it to be justified in the light of the recent decision of the Jerusalem council?

7) Why should the apostle want such a youthful companion?

2. Labors among the established churches.
   a. What cities are meant in vs. 4?
   b. What special item is mentioned in connection with the visits to these churches? Were these decrees meant for them also?
   c. What else did the apostle do in these churches?
   d. Were his labors blessed?

B. Led to Troas, 16:6, ff.

1. What is meant by “Phrygia and the region of Galatia”?
   a. What cities are included in this region?
   b. Had Paul then come to the point where he would face the question as to where next to go?

2. Guided by the Spirit:
   a. Where did Paul evidently have in mind to go? What is meant here by “Asia”?
   b. Who forbade them to preach in Asia?
      1) How did this prohibition take place?
      2) Did not the Lord want the province of Asia evangelized? Was it not evangelized?
   c. Where did they naturally turn when forbidden to preach in Asia?
      1) Were they allowed to preach in Bithynia? Why not?
      2) The best reading in vs. 7 speaks of the “Spirit of Jesus.” Is this any different than the “Holy Ghost” in vs. 6? Why difference of terminology?
      3) Was not Bithynia to be evangelized? Was it evangelized by Paul?
   d. Is it correct to conclude that the only place left for Paul to go was Troas?
   e. What does this bit of history teach us concerning the time and place of the preaching of the gospel? Where in our Reformed confessions is this mentioned?

C. The Vision at Troas:

1. What is a vision?

2. What were the contents of this vision?
   a. How did Paul recognize the man as a Macedonian?
   b. Where was Macedonia in relation to Troas?
   c. What did the Macedonian man ask of Paul in the vision? How does Paul understand this “help”?
   d. Does this request in the vision indicate a readiness and a longing on the part of the Macedonians to hear the gospel?
      1) If so, whence did this longing arise?
      2) If not, what is the meaning of the request?
   e. Who called Paul and his company to preach the gospel in Macedonia? Did they understand the vision thus also?

3. According to vs. 10, who evidently was now with Paul, Silas, and Timothy?

4. What was the result of the vision which Paul saw? vs. 10.

(to be continued)
INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

This topic has been treated before, but since it was the one I had selected and worked on, will you bear with me, please?

We need but mention that a person is an individual and we know he or she is different from anyone else. An individual is one who exists as an entity. Is it not one of the wonders of God’s works that, among the millions of persons on the face of the earth, no two are alike? The word “differences” refers to the state or quality of being other or unlike. How well we know, then, that the above topic will not allow a teacher to “treat them all alike.”

The schools in this area do not have kindergarten classes. A child must be six years of age before January 1 if he is to be enrolled in September. The first days prove tiring to the beginner but if a child’s physical condition is good, it does not take him long to become adjusted to his day’s activity. He soon learns he is a full-time member of a classroom as well as a home.

Various characteristics reveal themselves during this adjustment and later. Some children have remarkable motor habits. This means skill in coordinating eye and hand movements, ability to focus the eyes well on printed lines, and to move the eyes from left to right. Others must be dealt with very cautiously because of difficulties in this respect. It is a revelation to a teacher who directs the hand of a child who is trying to make a certain letter or figure when she discovers that the hand of the child is rigid and wet with perspiration.

It is simple for children of school age to identify familiar animals, as cats, dogs, rabbits, etc. However, tracing broken-line sketches of these same animals serves to reveal differences in how adept a child is at coordinating visual and muscular activity. Sometimes improper coordination may be due to forcing a child to use the hand he does not naturally prefer; sometimes it is due to the need for an eye examination. Coloring the contours is another way to discover dissimilarities.

In a small child the attention span is limited. It is important for a teacher to have well-organized lesson plans. This does not mean, however, that the plans should never be altered. A certain plan may stimulate interest one day and prove to be a failure the next. Older children also need variety in their assignments. They do much better work if the lessons are not monotonous.

Some pupils are able to follow directions with little difficulty when these are given clearly and simply. Others soon show by their facial expressions the distress they are experiencing. The latter is not only true of small children. Older children, too, often need clear-cut instructions. Confusion reigns in the minds of children who do not grasp things readily. On the other hand, an instructor must be careful not to encourage inattention during assignment time. Day-dreaming is a sweet pastime for some.

Little children cannot be expected to adhere to any particular mode of expression or to speak fluently and grammatically. Nevertheless, there must be progress through the years. Oral reports

(Continued on page 14)
The subject of this article as it has been given to me is rather broad. To treat the subject completely, therefore, would be quite impossible within the limits of this short article. If there should be some who find this topic to be of special interest to them, we would refer them to the very fine series of articles that is currently being written for The Standard Bearer by the Rev. George Lubbers.

I presume, however, that in the assigning of this topic it was not intended that treatment should be given to all the various aspects of marriage concerning which the seventh chapter of First Corinthians speaks. Rather, I Corinthians 7 is referred to in the topic because of the perplexing teaching which it often seems to present. There are a number of passages in Scripture, among which this chapter may well be included, which perennially give rise to question because they seem to present ideas that are foreign to the remainder of Scripture. The particular problem of this chapter arises already in the first verse of the chapter where the apostle writes, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” It is further brought to the fore in following verses, such as verses 7 and 8, “For I would that all men were even as I myself... I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I,” verse 27, “Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife,” and verses 32 and 33, “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” The total impression one is apt to receive from all this is that Paul would advocate the single life as being preferable to marriage. This strikes one as being far different from that which is taught in other portions of Scripture, such as Gen. 2:18, “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

The difficulty in this passage arises from a misinterpretation of Paul's true meaning. For an example we may well use the statement found in the first verse, “It is good for a man not to touch a woman.” The difficulty here is with the word “good.” This word seems to imply that it is morally a virtue for a man not to marry a woman. The assumption is quickly taken that celibacy is to be preferred to marriage. But this is not the meaning of the apostle. Perhaps it is the translators' fault. This sentence could as well be translated, if not preferably so, “It is right for a man not to touch a woman.” The thought is not that the single state is better than the married, but only that it is a state proper and correct within itself.

It seems as if in Corinth at the time that Paul wrote this epistle there was considerable difference of opinion concerning certain aspects of Christian walk and life. Among these were various opinions concerning marriage and its relative value for the Christian. Perplexed by their problems, the Corinthians sent a number of questions to Paul for him to answer. In this chapter Paul gives the answers to the various questions concerning marriage. The basic thought which he wishes to express in regard to the problem which we are considering is not that the single state is at all times to be preferred to the married state, neither that the married state is to be preferred to the single state, but that the evaluation of either state is to be made according to the particular circumstances.
For the single person who stands before the choice of marrying or remaining single, the choice must be spiritually determined according to the particular circumstances.

On the one hand, Paul has good reason to believe that it is often desirable for the Christian to marry. It is because of the natural weakness of the flesh. Not all have the gift of continency, that is to say, not all are easily able to hold their thoughts and their will in complete control. The thoughts of evil and corruption often are able to gain control over our minds and over our bodies. Further, the sinful world ever stands ready to lead the weak astray with its temptations of sexuality and sin. For such who have not the strength to resist these temptations, Paul’s advice is to marry, “for it is better to marry than to burn.” In this light one can easily see why in the world of our day it is often considered preferable for the child of God to marry. In the modern age in which we live, wicked men are ever ready to flaunt and display the evils of sexuality and immoral living. One must be strong to withstand these evils, and the Christian should avail himself of every means which is spiritually convenient to withstand this wicked age.

On the other hand, however, marriage is not an automatic answer to all of one’s spiritual problems. There are advantages also to the single state. As Paul writes, “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.” Marriage has also its temptations for one’s spiritual life. A married person is often tempted to lose himself in the duties and responsibilities of married life. This may lead to the point where marriage becomes a snare to him to detract him from the things of the Lord. From temptation in this manner the single person is relatively free. He much more easily has time and opportunity to seek the things which are of God.

In conclusion we may say that this chapter has an important lesson for our Protestant Reformed young people. Many of you shall soon stand before the decision whether you shall marry or not. The important consideration in each particular case is not, as the world would have you believe, whether you are “in love” or not. The important question is how you may best serve the Lord. Sincerely and prayerfully seek the guidance of the Scriptures and of the spiritual advisors which are available unto you. If you marry, let it be unto the Lord. If you remain single, let that also be unto the Lord. But in every case, keep yourselves from evil.

PENCILS and CHALK
(Continued from page 12)

should be given. Portions of Scripture should be recited in front of the class:
Though children like to follow the way of least resistance, they must be taught that proper sentence structure and the making of paragraphs are a must. Word pictures are a form of art. How abilities vary, only a teacher knows.

Some pupils should be encouraged to contribute freely as a lesson is in progress; others must be tactfully discouraged. Some recoil when an idea must be expressed; others bubble over with eagerness. These tendencies are neither developed nor curbed in one or two weeks.

In our Edgerton school we do not have a large number of pupils in each grade. This is due to the fact that the enrollment consists solely of children of our nineteen families. It is an inspiration to have our people willing to walk in this oft difficult way. However, when the Lord instills a desire, He also opens the way. May we go on in His strength wherever we have established our schools.

Mrs. H. Veldman
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