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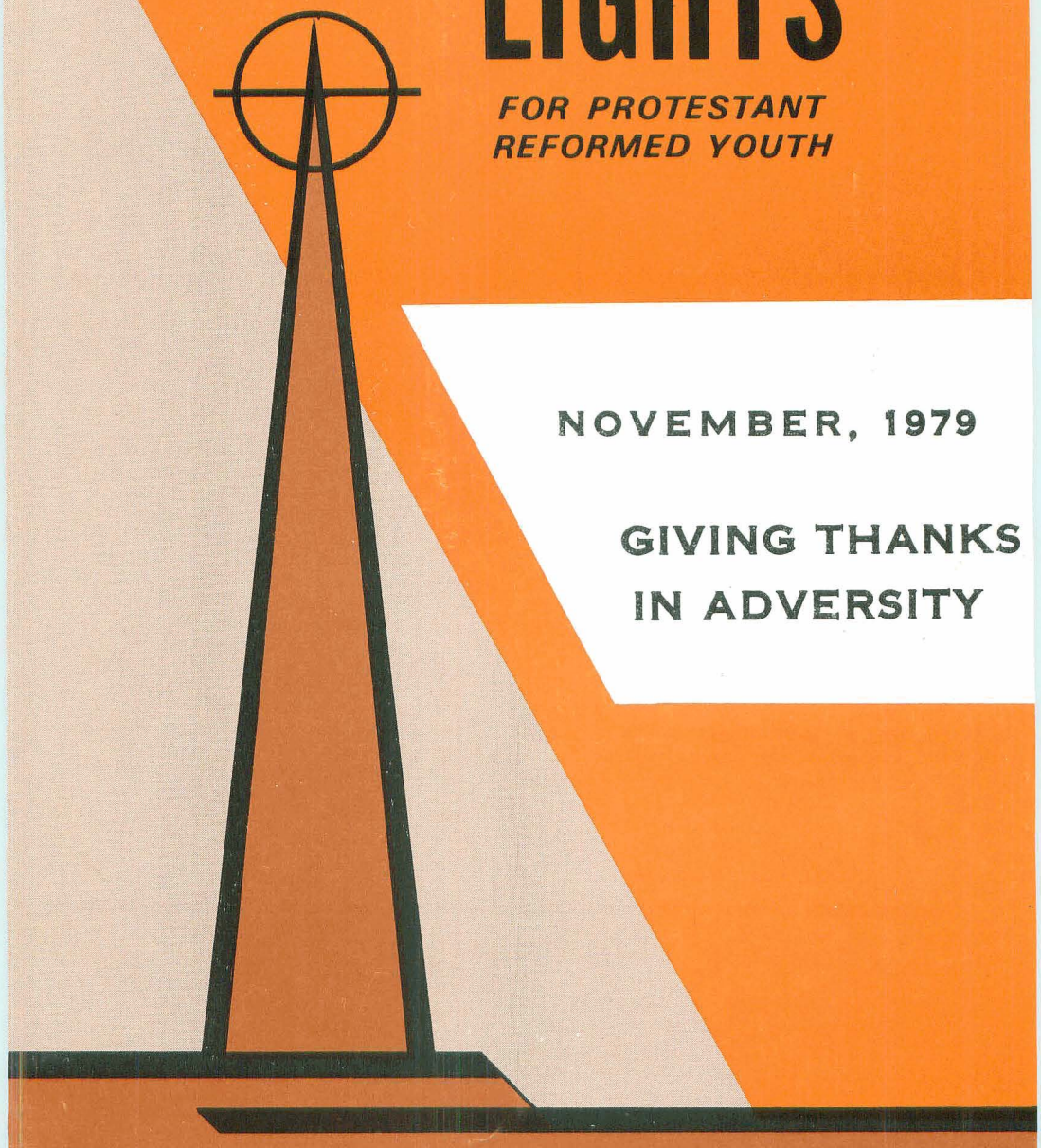
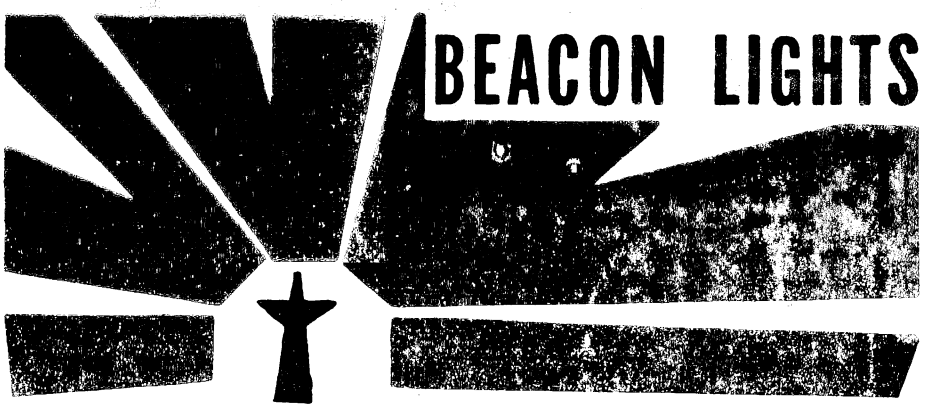


NOVEMBER, 1979

GIVING THANKS IN ADVERSITY



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Editorial

WHAT A FRIEND

by Harry Langerak

Have you ever taken the time to think about how much your friends mean to you? We often take them for granted and yet if we did examine their importance in our lives, we are sure to find that they have a tremendous influence on us. It has been said that as teenagers our friends influence us more than anyone. There is no doubt that though often exaggerated there is an element of truth to this statement. Our friends and particularly those who are closest to us have such an influence that often times they will determine what we do, what we sing, what we wear, and even what we think. Not only do they influence us in every way, but they are necessary to us. God has created us in such a way that we need friends. We need someone to talk to about our joys and disappointments. We need friends with whom we can laugh and cry when the occasion arises. This is why it is so sad when one does not have a friend.

Since friends are so important in our lives, it is well for us to examine what the Scriptures have to say to us on this crucial subject. The Scriptures give us some very important characteristics of friends and also some examples of how friends must behave towards one another.

In the first place, Scripture speaks of friends as those who hold each other in high esteem. In order to do this they must see in each other a Scriptural quality which is worthy of this esteem. Friends who share the love of God have the spiritual quality which will allow them to serve each other in humility. Christ, who is our perfect friend, became our servant. "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:27-28 With this spiritual quality, a friendship will be able to stand the test of many severe trials. Think of the trials the friendship of David and Jonathan had to endure. David was given the throne of Israel, which by earthly standards should be Jonathan's. Add to that the burden caused by Saul's hatred of David. Listen to Jonathan as he speaks to his friend:

"The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the Lord be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth." I Samuel 20:13-16

Scripture also indicates that the love that friends have for each other is rooted in the love that God has for them. This means that friendship has a common bond which will unite friends together in harmony of action. They will like the same things and think the same Godly thoughts which will be in harmony with God's love for them. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." I John 4:7,8,21 It is this love by which Jonathan could love David as his own soul even though he knew that David was to have the kingdom. "And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul." I Samuel 20:17 And David could speak of Jonathan in the psalm in II Samuel 1:26 when he was killed in battle. "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

With a friend whose love is rooted in God, we will have a blessed companionship which will allow us to share moments of joy and sorrow. As friends, our moments of joy will be unspeakable and full of glory and our sorrow will look to the blessed hope of the glorious resurrection. The reality of this companionship is expressed in a rather well-known hymn "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear! What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer."

True friends will seek to protect each other. We do not mean here the wicked protecting of a friend from the consequences of his sin by covering up for him. What Scripture has in mind is a deeply spiritual protection patterned after Christ's protection of us when He laid down His life on the cross for His people. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13 Our protection of our friend must be such that it seeks to protect the spiritual well-being of our friend.

Friend are also loyal to one another. The loyalty of which I am speaking will bring friends through the toughest of trials. In fact, friends who go through as it were thick and thin will have their loyalty strengthened. Let me remind you once again of the loyalty of David and Jonathan, whose trials were many, and yet we read that each loved the other better than his own soul. What a difference between this loyalty and the loyalty we find recorded in regard to the friends of the prodigal son who left him when adversity came. The loyalty of Scripture is the loyalty of a friend who loves at all times (Proverbs 17:17) and the loyalty of a friend that sticketh closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

Finally, friends who have their friendship rooted in Christ will be completely honest with one another. Honesty is a virtue which can be the most difficult part of friendship because honesty can make wounds which hurt a friend. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend: but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." Proverbs 27:6 A friend will offer suggestions for improvement and also rebuke where necessary, but a friend will never deceive. He may open wounds, but they will heal quickly because we know they are born out of love.

All that we have written about our relationship to our friends is but a dim picture of the reality of our friendship with God in Christ. God has brought us into blessed covenant fellowship with Himself. He has established a bond of friendship with us in Christ which cannot be broken. And what a friend He is to us for He is the perfect friend. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 15:15-16

Do you have friends who would meet the criteria that Scripture gives us? If you do, you have a great blessing of God and a wonder of God's grace because He alone can give you the eye of faith to see the importance of God-fearing spiritually motivated friends. If not, and your friends are of this world, be warned by James when he writes in James 4:4 "... know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

And do not forget to be a friend. How do you expect to have friends without being one? As a friend, do not forget to show the Christian virtues that it takes to be a friend. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Proverbs 18:24

GIVING THANKS IN ADVERSITY

by Rev. R. Flikkema

There is certainly no question about it that adversity is a very common thing. It is so very common. In the world in which we live it is common. That that is true you cannot help but notice if you page through a newspaper or a news magazine for example. Almost on every page of every single newspaper or news magazine the topic that stares you in the face is adversity. This adversity is mentioned or that adversity is mentioned. This trouble is mentioned or that trouble is mentioned. This strife is mentioned or that strife is mentioned. It seems as though that is all that you read about, so common is adversity in the world in which we live.

However, not only is it true that adversity, that trouble, is a common thing in the world round about us, but it is also true that adversity is a common thing in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the life of every single child of God. It is. In your life and in my life adversity is so very common. Just think for example of the very common form of adversity known as persecution. Persecution is indeed a very severe form of adversity. When God's people have their homes and their families taken away from them because of their firm stand upon the truths of Scripture, that is persecution (adversity). When God's people testify to the world round about them that they are Jesus' sheep for whom He died, and when they testify to the world round about them that they love their Good Shepherd Who gave His life for them, and as a result of that love their lives are taken away, that is persecution (adversity). And I submit to you that that form of adversity, God's people, the very Church of Jesus Christ, experience every day. I think sometimes that we have a tendency to forget that fact. Because we live in a society in which we are not persecuted, we tend to forget the fact that there are others of God's people out there in the world somewhere who are persecuted. We ought not do that. The persecution of the Church of Jesus Christ, yes, even in our day and age, is more common than we think.

And there are more examples of adversity that are so common in the life of the child of God. Just think of sickness and disease. Just think of the horrible pain and agony that a child of God experiences when his or her body is utterly filled with disease. The horrible pain and agony! That, I say, is adversity. And as if that is not enough, inseparably connected with that form of adversity is the mental pain and agony that always accompanies it. When a child of God experiences the adversity of physical pain and agony, he also experiences mental pain and agony. He becomes anxious. He becomes filled with worry. And sometimes he becomes so filled with anxiety and worry that he falls very deeply into despair. And not only is that true with respect to that child of God who suffers from physical pain and anguish, but that is also true of the loved ones of that child of God who must watch that child of God suffer. That is true of the loved ones of that child of God who must sit at that child of God's bedside day after day after day, and see that child of God slowly but surely

go to the grave. They too become filled with anxiety and worry. They too very often begin to despair. And in the depths of despair they ask themselves; why? Why has God done this to my son or my daughter, my husband or my wife, my father or my mother? Why? Does He not know the grief that we experience? Does He not care? That is adversity. And that form of adversity is so very common. I dare to say that there is not a one of us, no, not one of us, who has not experienced that form of adversity at least in some measure in our lives.

Oh yes, adversity is common in the life of the child of God. And particularly is that true in the life of young children of God. And by "young" children of God I refer specifically to you, young people. Young people, in your lives adversity is common. It is, isn't it? You too experience trouble and strife in many forms and in many ways. And we as parents do well to recognize that. Sometimes we as parents think of our young people as not having a care in the world. Sometimes we as parents think of our young people as though they have absolutely no troubles or problems. But they do. They certainly do. And we must not minimize them either. The adversities that you as young people experience, and that we as parents must recognize that you experience are these. You have the calling given to you by God to live your lives unspotted from the world. You must live your lives holily before your God. However, in the midst of that calling there are all those temptations by the world. There are as Scripture has it the "lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life" that so often appeal to you. The world uses all of its sinful pleasures to try and cause you to go astray. I do not have to enumerate them. That is not necessary. You know what they are. But the point is, when the world does that, when the world, so to speak, bombards you with all of its sinful pleasures, then you experience very really a struggle within yourselves. A very fierce struggle. And that very fierce struggle that you experience so commonly is adversity.

And to mention but a few more examples, there is the problem (adversity) that each of you young people have to face when it comes time for you to decide in what sphere of labor you must busy yourselves. You must ask yourselves the question: what is my God-ordained task in life? In what sphere of labor does my God want me to engage? That is a problem or adversity that you face. And in addition to that there is this fundamental adversity that faces each one of you young people, namely, the adversity (problem), the question of who must be your help meet in life. You must ask yourself the question: Whom does God want me to marry? Is it he? Is it she? How do I know? I think it is not unrealistic for me to say that some of you undoubtedly lie awake night after night with those very questions in your minds. If you do, you experience adversity.

A common thing is adversity. But the question is, and young people, this question is so very important: Is our thanksgiving in the midst of our adversities as common as the adversities themselves? Is it? Is it as common as the adversities themselves? The theme of this article is "Giving Thanks in Adversity". Do we do that?

With respect to the world and the adversities that it experiences the answer to that question is clear. The answer to that question is a resounding, No! No, the world never give thanks in the midst of the adversities that it experiences. It never gives thanks. But on the contrary, the only thing that the world does is grumble and complain. Instead of giving thanks, the only thing that the world does is shake an angry fist at Almighty God.

But God's people, the Church of Jesus Christ, in the midst of its adversities is different, isn't it? Or is it? You and I in

the midst of our adversities are different, aren't we? Or are we? We give thanks, don't we? Or do we?

Do we? Do we give thanks to God when we suffer persecution for righteousness sake? Do we give thanks to God when we suffer pain and agony because of disease? Do we give thanks to God when we experience the anguish of seeing our loved ones suffer? And young people, do we give thanks to God when we experience the particular adversities that are so common in our lives? Do we?

I am afraid that if we ask ourselves that question the only answer that we can possibly give to that question is also, No. No, we do not give thanks to God in the midst of our adversities. No, our prayers of thanksgiving to God are not as common as the adversities that we experience. Instead of giving thanks to God in our adversities, we too so very often only grumble and complain.

But that should not be the case. We should not grumble and complain in the midst of our adversities, but rather, give thanks to God. And not only that, not only is it the case that we should give thanks to God in the midst of our infirmities, but it is also the case that that is our calling to do so. That is our calling. It is our calling before the face of God to give thanks in our adversities. That is I Thessalonians 5:18, is it not? In I Thessalonians 5:18 we read these words, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Notice that, "In everything give thanks." In **everything**. Not just when things, so to speak, go right in our lives. Not just when we do not experience any particular problem or adversity in our lives. Oh no! I Thessalonians 5:18 does not say that. But rather it says, "In **everything** give thanks." And that means, young people, that it is our calling to give thanks to God even when we experience adversity.

But you say: yes, but that is so hard. That is so difficult. It is so very difficult for me to give thanks when I experience adversity. Indeed it is. It is a difficult thing for us to express our thanksgiving unto God when we experience trouble on every side. But, nevertheless, difficult though that may be, it is still our calling.

And why is it our calling? The answer to that question is that it is our calling to give thanks even in adversity "for that is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." That is God's will. It is God's will to use all things, yes, even our adversities to work for our good. And because it is His will to do that, it is His will that we give thanks to Him for the good that He works through the adversities that we experience.

Do that then, young people. Give thanks to God. May it be true of you that your prayers of thanksgiving are as common as your adversities.

Cast thy burden on the Lord, Only lean upon His word;
Thou wilt soon have cause to bless His eternal faithfulness.

He sustains thee by His hand, He enables thee to stand;
Those whom Jesus once has loved from His grace are never moved.

Human counsels come to naught; That shall stand which God has wrought;
His compassion, love, and power are the same for evermore.

Anonymous

Truth vs. Error

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE

Let us take "*A Look at the Hypocrite's Hope,*" as sketched in Job 8:11-13. There we also consider that kind of religion which is like a golden mask worn over a leprous forehead.

In Job, chapter eight, verses 11-13, the Word of God reads, "Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water? whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." These are the words of Bildad the Shuhite. He leads us, like Pharoah's daughter, down to the river's edge among the cattails. Here we may find a Moses or gem of spiritual thought, concerning which we may say, "I took it out of the water." The slender swaying marsh rush has a word to speak to us. He who has ears to hear, let him hear what this reedy preacher has to say. The question might well be asked at this point, "What went ye out for to see?" and the answer would be "A reed shaken by the wind!" There is legitimate reason for contemplating the reed which represents the hypocrite and his cloak of religion.

1. THE HYPROCRITE'S PROFESSION and skin-deep religion may be compared to a rush in its flashy growth and evanescent existence. True Christians are like mighty oaks which take years to grow to maturity. But it is not only the conversion of the hypocrite that is sudden, for Saul's on the road Damascus and the Philippian jailer's were sudden but very sound conversions. The hypocrite's spiritual

growth shoots up like a weed, flourishes overnight and finds it easy to be green and fair in the words and ways of the Lord. As for the righteous, "That man is nourished like a tree Set by the river's side; Its leaf is green, its fruit is sure, And thus his works abide!"

The rush has not much substance, some being hollow. It looks firm enough to be a walking staff, but leaning on it, it is likely to break and pierce the one so trusting himself to it. It needs much water and is as unstable as water. So the hypocrite; he is imposing on the outside, but has no solid faith in Jesus Christ. He has a pretended confidence, not one resting firmly on the finished work of Christ. His belief, words and behavior are all hollow. He has no heart, or at best it is shrivelled. He has a form of godliness; but true godliness has no power in his life. His religion is spineless and empty.

The reed is easily shaken by the wind. So, many professing Christians are about us steady as a weather-vane. They can go with the theatre crowd or the night club and dance set. They dabble in the lottery, go off to the races or the hunt. In the latter activity they sometimes run with the hare, sometimes with the hounds. They are like the John Bunyan character, Mr. Anything, as they can be anything to anybody. If it is respectable and modern to call white black and black white, or to think everything is pretty much gray, that's fine with Mr. Anything. He easily shuttles back and forth from error to truth and truth to error, depending on what advantage he thinks he can gain from the one or the other. To him, truth is not the seed, heart, juice and flesh of the fruit, but merely the skin.

2. THE HYPOCRITE'S THRIVING is on what? "Can the rush grow up without mire?" The reed thrives in a slimy ooze. The hypocrite cannot live except on that which feeds his false piety. The rush requires a strong, fetid, smelly, miry, swampy, watery ground. None of your fine, firm black soil for the rush. So some people's religion requires a lot of excitement; revivals, lots of jazzy music, singing with body gestures, and speakers with sparkling humor. To hold the "television mentality", the church must adopt a circus format, and who can compete against that? The rush is all but a hot-house plant, thriving better in a hot climate. As long as the temperature is high, it does well, shining in its greenness. But a night of the frost of affliction, or perhaps also another of persecution, and it withers before any other vegetation! That is a very frothy religion which depends on excitement for its life. So is that religion which depends on bazaars, dramas and evangelistic films to keep its spiritual temperature high, rather than the one great mark of the true church, the pure preaching of the gospel. Under

modern Hollywood style evangelism, many think they have repented, dream they have believed and imagine they are children of God. The player at religion, like a dried up reed, eventually crumbles and blows away. The true Christian, like a palm tree, continues to bear fruit in the year of drought.

Some people's religion depends on prevailing prosperity. "Can the flag grow without water?" Is it "a root out of a dry ground"? "Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." The devil looks at these religionists and remarks, "Doth 'Job' serve God for nought?" Only here his remark justifiably applies. Many have joined the church when things were going very well with them. But when they suffered a series of set-backs, they attributed this to their having a connection with religion, and so gave up on the church. Sunshine and balmy breezes they can stand, but when icy winds blow, they do, too. They are "fair weather" Christians. Oh, how they will love God when the times have gone prosperously with them. But let them get a little adversity, then they are shocked, get mad at God and quit Him on the spot. But the Christian by adversities and afflictions has his affections set on things above, rather than on things of the earth. He holds earthly things lightly and learns to long for the things which are not seen but eternal.

The rush is a very respectable plant. It is found in its dried out state decorating many a living room. It's a dead, dehydrated, respectable plant. Some people are Christians because of what they deem the respectability of Christianity. They don't mind walking with truth when it rides on ticker-tape parade in a golden Cadillac, but not when she's in tatters and shivering barefoot in a dank, dark dungeon. What would you do if you had to follow Christ into prison as the Apostle Paul had to do? if the gospel were, as under Nero, declared an illicit religion? What if the times became as in the Inquisition when one jeopardized his life just to read the Bible? Would you secret your Bible away and read it in time and place you thought safe? Could you then own it that you are a Christian?

3. THE HYPOCRITE'S HOPE is dashed. The flag or the rush "while it is yet in its greenness and not cut down, withers before any other herb. So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrite's hope shall perish." Long before the Lord cuts the hypocrite down, as He most surely will do, then that poor miserable fake dries up for want of the mire holding his shallow roots. His shooting up like the fairy tale bean stalk fails him. His hollowness fails him. His flightiness leaves him

shaken to pieces. His excitement is evaporated. The prosperity he enjoyed failed him. All his respectability came to nothing. He, too, comes to nothing. How important, then, to heed the warning, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you (believers), unless (after all) ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).

There is a back door night club. The front door night club has its public red light entrance for open, known sinners. But the back door night club is that false, apostate, worldly church with its entertainment programs, and its parish house dances and card parties. Many churches are no more than glorified country clubs sprinkled with a little holy water. "Churches" like these become the back door to hell. There is a wide open public entrance to hell for the obvious, evident sinner. There is a back door to hell for the professed or pretended saint. There is a back door for the one merely visibly and outwardly religious, who has lived many years in supposed sincerity before men, but who has been all along a liar before God. There is a back door for the preacher who has been only a timeserver, claiming his job is just like any other job. He may have a glib, pious line, but understands not the truth, being blinded to it. There is a back door to hell for "church" members who attend church out of habit or custom, who are simply "playing church" and have never really concerned themselves with the pure preaching of the Word. So if you cannot stand up any better than a weaving, bending, hanging bullrush, you must answer to this: "If thou hast run with the footmen and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" We must flee the wrath to come by fleeing to the place where divine wrath is poured out in infinite intensity, there at the cross of Jesus, where He bore the wrath of God against the sins of mankind. There, as our only hope, we must, in true faith, see the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son ever cleansing us from all sin. The hope of the believer never fails. Amen.

(Prayer) God our Father, cause us by Thy gracious Holy Spirit to examine our own hearts that we may avoid the hypocrite's perishing and sure to perish hope. Grant that our faith may not only be sincere, but right, founded on Thy holy Word alone, and backed up by an every day life of godliness, to the praise of Thy Name, and in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Young People, read the good R.F.P.A. books available to you.

THOUGHTS CONCERNING PASTORAL CARE

by Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

While in Seminary the students receive a course entitled Poimenics. The purpose of this course is set forth in the syllabus used for study. It is "to prepare the student as much as possible for his calling and duties as a Pastor of the sheep of Christ." The course deals with the labors of a minister as he goes in and out among the members of his congregation applying the Word of God to their specific needs and cares. Being a pastor and being a preacher are two different aspects of a minister's calling. To be sure the two cannot be separated. Whether a minister proclaims the Word of God from the pulpit or individually to certain members of his congregation within a concrete situation he yet does so as the ambassador of Christ who proclaims God's Word to God's people.

I have been asked to write concerning some of my impressions of my pastoral labors now that I have been in the ministry for a little while. The first thought which struck me when I began was that pastoral care was different from and in a way more difficult than preaching. Not because preaching takes less time or less work but because in pastoral care one must deal with a certain problem which often times comes rather unexpectedly. For example, all of a sudden the telephone rings and I am told that tomorrow morning early a person will enter the hospital to undergo a serious operation. Or perhaps another calls and asks me to come over as soon as possible to discuss a certain problem he or she is having (a problem which is often left unsaid on the telephone). There then is no time for any detailed preparation; no time to rehearse the way in which you will say things. Perhaps in the former case related above I might have a little time to find a passage and to meditate upon it a while. But certainly there is not near as much time spent on what must be said as there would be for a sermon. The Word of God must be applied immediately to that particular need. It is certainly true, as our Professor told us, the course which we took could never, no matter how detailed a course it may have been, cover every conceivable situation a pastor might encounter in his ministry.

What to my mind must be remembered in all of one's pastoral

labors is the fact that I as a minister, who is called of God to labor as His undershepherd, am myself a sinner who must out of the love of Christ labor among the sheep of Christ who are also sinners. And that implies three things.

First, that I am dealing with saints which are sinners. Oh yes, we are the redeemed children of God. But we all have but a small beginning of that new life in Christ. That old man of sin within us is constantly working, turning us from the good that we will to do, causing us to perform the evil that we will not to do. All of us are sinners — redeemed sinners— but sinners nonetheless. Because we are sinners we often run up against difficulties in our lives. Many and varied are the difficulties; problems in the family or at work, illness, the afflictions of the aged, the bereaved, the widows and the widowers, those institutionalized (in hospitals or rest homes), unrepented of sins, mental illness, spiritual guidance with a view to a particular problem. Each difficulty in these various spheres is different and must be treated differently.

A minister has much more to do than many people tend to think. He does not merely have to produce two sermons a week and his labors are accomplished. I do not mean to leave the impression that a minister is far too busy for your problems. Never must we think that our problems are too small with which to bother the minister. They are not. Neither is he too busy for you. I would be very hurt if someone would fail to come to me because he thought I was too busy. Every minister of God would be. After all that is the minister's calling, and as an undershepherd of Christ he wants to be there whatever and whenever the need should arise. This is his place within the midst of the flock.

Secondly, that which is most fundamental in a minister's pastoral duties is that they must be performed out of love. Christ loves his people and he expects his undershepherds to do so also. The love of God and of his people must be the underlying principle of all that a Pastor does. I think that Christ himself sees to it that his undershepherds grow in that love. I have not even been in my congregation a full year and already I feel a very close attachment to it. I believe *every* minister of Christ feels that with regard to his own congregation. I am now beginning to understand that to leave a congregation to go to another is not an easy decision to make. After a year or two a minister is really just beginning to know and understand the needs of his congregation. He has learned through his labors among them to love them. And that love serves as a bond which unites him with them.

Out of that love many responses and affections flow; compassion and understanding for those with difficulties in life, sorrow for those who suffer from sickness or loss, concern for those who stray. You laugh with God's people but also you mourn with them. A pastor loves his sheep.

Finally, that which is always a burden to a pastor is the fact that he feels very incapable of himself to perform the tasks whereunto he is called. *I* feel very inadequate for the tasks. My own personal sins are always there to remind me that I am no better than the sheep. I have been called as an undershepherd of Christ to care for the flock and He by His grace qualifies me for the task. But at the same time God reminds me that I am nothing and am able to do nothing myself. In that way He humbles me and teaches me to rely upon Him. I as all of God's saints must pray unceasingly. I must ask God to fulfill in me all that is necessary to shepherd my flock. God by his grace and out of love for his people uses sinful and weak men to care for His Church. And ever thankful must we be that He does.

TWO NATURES

Clara Fennema

Walk upon a narrow way,
  And it is very straight,
But it leads to eternal life,
  And goes through Heaven's gate.

One part of me rebels to walk
  Upon this narrow way,
And it is prone to leave the path
  And from its confines stray.

But there is also found in me
  A perfect, sinless part,
Kept pure because the Son of God
  Is dwelling in my heart.

Two natures are at war in me,
  To do the right or wrong,
But, thanks to God, when I am weak
  Through Christ I am made strong.

FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

THE PASSOVER BOTH SACRIFICE AND SACRAMENT

"and ye shall keep it unto the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation shall kill it at even." (between the two evenings) Exodus 12:6

"This is the ordinance of the Passover" ... "in one house shall it be eaten." Exodus 12:43,46

This time I would like to ask of you to carefully read this little essay on a very interesting and important subject. The subject is not new; others have written on it better than I can. But it is quite important for the proper understanding of the God-instituted "sacraments" that it be understood that the Passover is **both** a sacrifice and a sacrament, and that it was thus kept in Israel. It was not merely a "memorial feast" but as a feast of commemoration it was, an Old Testament Sacrament on a par with the Sacrament of circumcision, which was a "sign and seal of the righteous which is by faith". (Romans 4:11)

There have ever been Protestants who maintained overagainst the teaching of Roman Catholicism that the Passover in Israel was not a sacrifice, but **merely** a feast of remembrance. As Israel later kept the feast, when they had entered the land of Canaan, it was not a sacrifice, it is then contended. Others have said that the Passover was not a "sacrament". Of course, it was not a sacrament in the New Testament sense! Nor, for that matter, was the Old Testament rite of circumcision a sacrament as is our New Testament baptism. But we do hold that both

circumcision and Passover were the Old Testament, typical sacraments, holy signs and seals, instituted by God, as the Jehovah of His people.

It is the Reformed position that baptism has taken the place of the O.T. circumcision. (Baptism Form) In the Form we read, "Since baptism has come in the place of circumcision...." The Heidelberg Catechism, Question 74 says, "...they must therefore be...distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." Both are signs and seals of the righteousness which is by faith. That is the Reformed position in contradistinction from the position of the Baptists!

Such is the clear teaching of Scriptures in many passages. Paul teaches in Colossians 2:11, 12 that the circumcision of Christ is tantamount to being buried with Christ in baptism. Paul says in Philippians 3:3, "for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." Circumcision, as a sign of the righteousness by faith, prefigured the circumcision not by hands, which is of Christ. It is a sign that the ungodly are justified by faith. (Romans 4:5)

Now what was true of the sign of circumcision is equally true of the "sign and seal" in the Passover feast as a **sacrifice** and **sacrament**. It is a sign and seal of the foregiveness of sins in the blood of the Paschal lamb, pointing to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Just as baptism took the place of the O.T. circumcision, so the Lord's Supper took the place of the O.T. Passover. The last Passover feast was translated by Jesus Himself into the New Testament Supper of the Lord in the night in which He was betrayed.

* * * * * *

It is quite evident that the sacrifice in the Passover was very unique. There was no other sacrifice in Israel like it. This should be clearly seen and we shall attempt to point this out now.

First of all, it should be noticed that the Passover feast was arranged and instituted by the **Lord** on a very special occasion. It was not instituted by God on Mount Sinai at the time when Moses received the law from God by the hands of angels. (Galatians 3:19) It really was not at all a part of the law-giving. Jesus makes a point of it, according to John 7:22, that circumcision was not really given by Moses in the law-giving, but that it was "of the fathers", Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So also the institution of the Passover was prior to Moses' giving of the law. It belongs not to the law-giving but it belongs in the very warp and woof of the fulfilment of the promise, to wit, Israel's redemption from Egypt, the land of spiritual bondage. Israel was a picture of sin's dominion! The sacrifice here ordered of the lamb is one which is in a class all by itself. It is not a sacrifice ordered in Sinai, but in the very land of Egypt, in the night of the death of the firstborn of Egypt. Here the Lord brings forth His Firstborn Son out of Egypt. Harking back to this Hosea says, "out of Egypt have I called my Son." (Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15)

It seems to me that this places this matter a bit in the light of the prophetic word as fulfilled in Jesus. This shows that the sacrifice of the Passover has a character and nature all of its own.

It was most definitely a sacrifice. Rome has perpetuated this sacrifice in their popish mass, which is a denial of the one sacrifice of Christ. But the Passover must needs remain a sacrifice until the Seed should come to whose death on the Cross it pointed. When Israel entered into the land of Canaan, the Passover lamb was no longer slain by the head of the houses, but it was now the duty of the Levites in the temple. (II Chronicles

30:16; 35:11; Ezra 6:19) Afterwards, the blood was sprinkled by the priest on the altar and the Passover meal-time was held in the temple (Deuteronomy 16:2) where God had placed His name.

So the Passover was, first of all, very definitely a sacrifice.

It is, furthermore, very interesting and instructive to notice that the Passover was not limited to being a sacrifice, but that it was a sacrifice that ended in a meal-time, a sacramental eating of the slain lamb. After the lamb, without spot or blemish, had been chosen and slain, the blood was taken and put on the door posts of the houses on that first Passover feast in Eypgt. In later times, however, after Israel had entered into the land, the blood was sprinkled on the altar. After this, the lamb was eaten **whole**. Not a bone of it was to be broken. It was not to be prepared like our lamb chops, but the "body" of the lamb was to be eaten. Hence, no uncircumcized person might partake of it. (Exodus 12:48b) It was a Jehovah-supper with His people between the two evenings. Also the women and children might partake of it, even though the women were not circumcized. It was a partaking of the blood of the covenant sacramentally, a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith, be such a believer male or female, adult or child. In hope, it was an eating of the "body" of Christ. It looked to the fulfilment of the Word made flesh, who said: "sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a **body** didst thou prepare me." (Hebrews 10:5; Psalm 40:6-8) Israel was saved in the "surety" which Christ presents in the Old Testament sacrament. (Hebrews 7:22) In faith, Israel looked to the great Passover to come, which Passover is now slain. (I Corinthians 5:7b)

There is still another matter which must not escape our notice. We refer to the fact that the sacrifice in the Passover must be clearly distinguished from both the sin-offerings and the thankofferings which were prescribed on Sinai. The Passover sacrifice was not such a sin-offering. Notice particularly, that the sin-offering might **not be eaten** as was the Passover sacrifice of the perfect lamb. The sin-offering must be burned without the camp outside of the gate. (Deuteronomy 4:20, 21) Not so the lamb of the Passover. This must be eaten whole; it must be eaten as a "body" of the lamb. Then, too, the Passover was not a sacrifice like the thankofferings prescribed on Sinai. The latter followed the bringing of the sin-offerings and they presupposed that reconciliation had been brought already. Not so the Paschal offering. This was brought to bring about reconciliation. Here in the Passover, we have a meal-time which represented the perfect sacrifice which must be eaten. Except ye eat my flesh ye have no life in you. This Passover feast was both sacrifice and sacrament, as it pointed back to the deliverance in the night of the death of the firstborn of Egypt, and as it pointed forward to the night in which Jesus would be betrayed, and would die as the Firstborn Son of God, and would by His death and resurrection grant us to eat the bread and wine new in the Kingdom of heaven.

Yes, it was definitely a sacrament in Old Testament Form. It was not the "law" which said do this and thou shalt live, but it was the gift of God which is eternal life: redemption from sin and death. It was a sign and seal of the righteousness which is by faith.

Now the sacrifice is no more. To revive it is the horrible error of Rome. Christ died once in the end of the ages. He fulfilled His "exodus" at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:31) Now we have the fulfilment of the communion sacrament of the Old Testament, the supper of Jehovah God with His redeemed people. The great antitype has become reality in Christ's blood on the Cross.

THOUGHTS ON OUR WORSHIP

THE PREACHING

Preaching is the authoritative proclamation of the gospel by the Church in the service of the Word of God through Christ.

Preaching is authoritative proclamation. It is the proclamation of the gospel, that is, the whole Word of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Preaching is proclamation of the gospel by the Church; for only the Church is able to send the preacher.

Preaching stands in the service of the Word of God through Christ; for only Christ through the Spirit, can make the preaching of the Word powerful and efficacious as a means of grace.

Through the preaching it pleases God through Christ, the exalted Lord, the Chief Prophet of God, Who alone gathers His Church, to speak to His people unto salvation." The preaching must be the central most prominent part of the Worship Service.

(Reformed Dogmatics, by Herman Hoeksema)

NEWS From, For, and About Our Churches

by Linda Kaiser

BIRTHS

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Doezema of First were blessed with a daughter, Kathleen Joy, on September 10.

Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Jabaay of Faith rejoice in the birth of their son, Brian Ross, on September 19.

Mr. and Mrs. Gysbert Van Baren of South Holland were blessed with the birth of a son, Eric Jon.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Osterink of Southwest rejoice in the birth of a daughter.

Mr. and Mrs. William Clason of Faith were blessed in the birth of a son, Monty William.

MARRIAGE

The marriage of Dan Pastoor and Lori Dykstra took place on September 28 at Hope Church.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

First Church has received the membership papers of Mr. James A. Dykstra from Grace Christian Reformed Church of

Kalamazoo.

Hope Church has sent the membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Ron Koole to Hull, and those of Steve Hanko to Loveland.

First Church has sent the membership papers of Mrs. Beverly Kuiper, nee Dykstra, to Hudsonville.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

A fall retreat was sponsored by the Federation Board of September 14-15 at Camp Manito-Lin. Activities included panel discussion, campfire, and volleyball.

Mr. Jim Vander Kolk was the song leader of the sinspiration on September 23 in Hudsonville sponsored by the Federation Board.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Hope Church held a program on October 5 for Rev. Harbach's retirement. Rev. Schipper was the speaker and there was singing and refreshments.

Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church is now holding services at South Christian Grade School located at 3333 South Westnedge until further notice.

ARIE GRIFFIEON
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SINGSPIRATION DATES

For Greater Grand Rapids Area.

1979

Nov. 18 - Thanksgiving - Hope
Dec. 23 - Christmas - Hudsonville

1980

Feb. 17 - Southeast
March 16 - Hope