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FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

BEACON LIGHTS

Contents

Editor's Comments - Davio Harbach 1
EDITORIAL
Proverbs for Young Pilgrims - The Ants - Ed Lotterman 1
FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN
The Joys of Conception - The Joy of Service - Mrs. H. Brands 3
TRUTH VS. ERROR
God's Wisdom - Rev. R. C. Harbach 5
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT:
"As I Have Loved You - Mr. D. Doezema 9
Love - Mrs. M. B. Lubbers 12
Developing Love - Rev. R. Van Overloop 15
Fulfil Ye My Joy - Ellen Dick 17

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

by David Harbach

The first fruit of the Spirit on "Love" appears in this issue. Mr. Don Doezema writes on love in the life of Christ, "As I Have Loved You". Marybeth Lubbers writes on love in the life of David and Jonathan, "Love" I Samuel 19:1. Rev. Ron Van Overloop ends with "Developing Love" in our daily life. If you have any suggestions for other themes in the scripture that you would like to see written about, send me a letter. The next fruit of the Spirit will be "Joy" which will appear in the March issue, D.V.

The Beacon Lights staff expresses its appreciation for the faithful years of service that Mike Lotterman has put forth. He has helped organize our treasurer's books and took care of the mailing of the issues over the past three years. We miss him already at our meetings. Mike will marry Grace Houck soon, D.V.

Proverbs for Young Pilgrims

Editorial

THE ANTS

by Ed Lotterman

Proverbs 30:25 "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer."

The ants, we learn from vs. 24, are the first of "four things which are little upon the earth, but . . . exceeding wise." Interesting it is that, in God's creation, He provided us such a creature as an ant. Pests, are they not? Holy Writ however, instructs us to observe the ways of ants in order that we may develop spiritually.

Tiny creatures, these insects are. One stomp of your foot eliminates several ants as they throng at the opening of their den. The fact that many are on the scene of an ant hill indicates to us that they are a social type of creature.

They live in colonies, they work together, they have a common cause. Yet because of their size, or perhaps lack of size, they are not strong. A small crumb of bread, for example, is sometimes too large for one ant to handle alone.

Working together, a colony of ants can accomplish several objectives. They establish their community. Some types of ants tunnel their way through the earth, for example, which tunnels then become "roads" leading to housing or food storage areas. The "houses" then

must be made comfortable and, as our Proverb also suggests, the food storage areas must be filled. The colony understands that it must be prepared for the present and the future, for ahead is winter; preparations must be made.

Striking, is it not, Young Pilgrim, that God has given to us these pesty little creatures for our spiritual profit? Our Proverb maintains that we must pay attention to these miserable little pests for they are wise. (vs. 24)

Do we see our sin and misery when we observe these creatures? Do we see the cross? Do we understand by the example of a colony of ants how we ought to walk in true gratitude to God?

Ants are so small, so insignificant, and such bothersome little beasts. Indeed, wretched we are by nature! On account of our sins against the Most High God, what pests we are! Do we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think? (Rom. 12:3) Puny, insignificant creatures before our Maker, are we not?

Ants are not strong. But O, Young Pilgrim, how we would stand in our own strength! We do this and we accomplish that. Inclined to all evil, we would rely upon our own strength independent of our Maker. Do we confess as in Job 9:19 "If I speak of strength, lo, He is strong"?

Ants are a people. And thanks be to God that in Jesus Christ there is a communion of saints! There is mutual exhortation, encouragement, and edification in the colony. There is work to be done together in the common cause of the Glory of God, and to the praise of His Name.

Ants need food. We, too, need spiritual food. God has given to us His Son, the Word made flesh, Who is the Bread of Life. His crucified body and shed blood is our spiritual food and drink. Through Him we are nourished unto everlasting life.

Ants are prepared. Do we avail ourselves of the utensils provided for us in order that we may be prepared to partake of the nourishment? Ants are not lazy! For them it is **work**; a flurry of activity surrounds an ant hill. No leisure time, only work. Do you, Young Pilgrim, read spiritual literature, listen to spiritual music, participate in spiritual discussions, and commit Scripture to memory?

Ants work in the summer. While there is time, while we have the opportunity, we must prepare! The time comes when it will be too late to work. Read, study, commit to memory the Scriptures. Understand how the life of Christ in you must be revealed in all of your activities. We cannot pursue our pilgrimage with one eye fixed on Mount Zion and the other eye wandering! A colony of weak ants, while there is opportunity, works to maintain its existence.

Young Pilgrim, see the ants.

1985 SINGSPIRATION CALENDAR

February 17	First
April 21	Faith
May 19	Hope
August	Pre Convention
September 15	Southwest
November 17	Faith
December 15	Hudsonville

The Joys of Conception

Focus on Christian Women

THE JOY OF SERVICE

by Carol Brands

About a year ago I read an article interviewing young married couples in college in which each couple was asked how many children they planned to have and why. I will never forget the picture of one young couple, apparently much in love and jogging for exercise, who candidly admitted that they planned never to have any children at all because children would interfere with their own needs for self-fulfilment. They calmly admitted that this was totally selfish but it was what they wanted and they intended to be true to themselves and their desires.

I could look at many mothers in Israel for contrast. One such mother is my husband's. Now an 82-year-old woman, she has spent all her life busy in the service of others. With her husband, she has raised a family of nine children, teaching them faithfully the fear of God. She, like so many women, has spent years and years in the frustrating labors without modern wash machines and in older homes, laboring endlessly just to meet the daily requirements of her family and to maintain things. With her husband, she gardened annually a huge garden, much of her pleasure in the garden being to give away as much as she could. Every Sunday evening, still now, she looks forward to her children and grandchildren coming home for lunch and a visit. . .and, though she is old and we all feel we should be serving her, she is still the one who prepares the extensive lunch, who makes sure it is all served, and who is the last to sit down, not relaxing until she is sure everyone is well served. Although she enjoys studying and is always well prepared for Bible study classes, the heartbeat of her life is that of service for others.

Theoretically, I suppose, either scene could picture a home without God as the head (that is, if you remove the love of Bible study from the second).

But even theoretically, **only** the second scene could possibly picture a home where the woman is a child of God, serving Him in a submissive life.

In God's church, we are all born to serve. Our service may be in different areas with varying abilities and talents, but we are called to self-effacement and service of others. Philippians 2 illustrates Christ as our example of selfless service of others. This service is not our **way to** salvation, of course (that is modern liberalism) but is His working in us as the **way of** salvation, the result of God's work in us. For the Christian wife and mother, this service centers in the home where she serves

her husband and children.

Now, such service of God first and others second and self last is not natural. By nature we are all like the selfish couple who wanted no children. Even as regenerated children of God, we still have the fight with our old natures. And our old nature wants to put **me** on the throne: me first, me, me. . . . We fight this battle with self-centeredness until we die.

For most godly women, God uses the state of marriage and motherhood to lead into the framework of service. Many headstrong, willful, self-centered teenagers have by God's grace been softened into submissive wives and mothers. He uses the combination of His love and chastening in these situations to bring about the change. This discipline of service begins at home but becomes a part of the person so that it extends to all areas of life everywhere.

It is not so difficult to see how this happens. But one principle we must keep in mind first. We are always either progressing or retrogressing, either improving or getting worse. In every trial, we either emerge a loser who is embittered or the winner who by grace is sweetened. In the following illustration, I am picturing the woman in whom God rules and grace is victorious.

A young woman, accustomed to being "waited on hand and foot" at home, marries. She is deeply in love but views love mainly as an emotion which will, without any effort on her part, give her pleasure the rest of her life. Lo and behold, within days of her marriage she discovers that she must now arise with the birds to prepare her husband's food for the day. She must organize all her life around him so that his life may be organized. Her independence is lost forever! But, by God's grace because she loves God and her husband, she learns thus to serve her husband.

A year or two after marriage, the young couple has a baby. How the new mother loves that child! She desires for him not just earthly good but true spiritual good, that he may know and love God. And thus begins a whole new area of service, of selfless service. She gets up night after weary night to feed her baby while a month or more passes before she even gets the reward of a smile. She feeds and cares for that little one during the pleasant months of his learning so many new things but then she also selflessly cares for him as he gets old enough to rebel and throw tantrums and resist authority, when she must begin the painful job of discipline. Always her eye is on the future, on training him to be what he should be in God's Kingdom. And gradually, little by little, without her being much aware of it, her own personality changes from one of expecting to be served to one of serving others instead. God's love in her, using the states of marriage and motherhood, has worked this change.

What a blessing! What a joy! We cannot know true happiness and joy when our lives focus on ourselves, expecting others to cater to us. True joy is found in fellowship with God which then also finds expression in love and service of others.

"Blest the man that fears Jehovah. . .

"In thy wife thou shalt have gladness;
She shall fill thy home with good,
Happy in her loving service
And the joys of motherhood."

Truth vs. Error

GOD'S WISDOM

by Rev. R.C. Harbach

"He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee. Behold, God is mighty. . . mighty in strength and wisdom" (Job 36:4, 5). In the previous article we wrote of the knowledge of God. Now, since wisdom presupposes knowledge, it is fitting that we make a study of the attributes of God's wisdom. As we have seen, God's knowledge is perfect. He perfectly knows Himself, His infinite nature, the divine persons in the Godhead and all His attributes. Here we have God in His omniscience, — perfect in knowledge; in His omnipresence — He is with thee; and in His omnipotence — God is mighty, mighty in strength — a way of saying God is of supernatural power, the Almighty. When Scripture tells us that "God is mighty . . . in . . . wisdom" the meaning is that God's strength is moderated with wisdom, so that He uses His strength and knowledge in the employ of the best means, in the best manner, to the highest purpose. As Charles Hodge put it, wisdom is the greatest and most wonderful adaptation of means to accomplish the highest good, the manifestation of His own glory. So the whole course of history, as interpreted by divine revelation, evidences God's wisdom in His making all things work together for the good of His people. Knowledge is the understanding of the good and right principles as mined out of Scripture; wisdom is the knowing how to apply and use those principles. In God, His knowledge is His omniscience; His wisdom is His skill in using His omniscience to the glory of His name.

God's wisdom is denied by some. Some say that the use of means to gain an end is a sign of weakness. This is not true, neither in respect to the creature, nor in respect to the Creator. The Oriole builds a finely-woven, bag-shaped, nest as a means to providing a safe place for the raising of its young. This is no sign of weakness, fault or blemish in this creature, but of God-given measure of beauty, strength and ingenuity and a great deal more good sense than God has given the ostrich (Job 39:13-17). So the Creator ordained as an end to have a glorified people, and as a means to that end He ordained to create the universe and all creatures. This use of means to attain His end, so far from being a manifestation of weakness, proves to be evidence of His omnipotence, omniscience and wisdom! The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse showeth His handiwork. In wisdom He made all of them (Ps. 104:24), and for His pleasure they are now in existence and were created in the first place! (Rev. 4:11). Besides, God within the intertrinitarian fellowship of the three persons in Their eternal, infallible counsel determined on the best means to accomplish His highest end. In contrast to men, there

was never a shred of ignorance nor indeterminateness nor defect in His plan or the course He would take. God never at any point in His eternal purpose had to reconsider or improve it. It is eternally perfect. All this wisdom was with Him from all eternity. "Known unto God (in eternity) are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18).

God's wisdom is His essentially, originally and independently. It is "dated" in Him from eternity; He forever has it in and from Himself. It is not that wisdom is objective even to Him, so that He must be a spectator of it, learn from it, let it make Him wise. Nor does He **make** Himself wise. It is His eternal nature to **be** wise. God **is** His attributes, therefore God's wisdom is Himself. His wisdom is infinitely perfect, and so can neither be increased nor diminished.

The wisdom of God is seen in His determining the Person to be the Mediator and Deliverer. That One could not be taken from us sinners, for we all need a Savior; we cannot save ourselves. Then we cannot save and redeem another person. We can only daily increase our debt. No mere creature, say an angel, is able to be our deliverer and make satisfaction for us. For a righteous God would not punish any other creature for the sin which man has committed; nor could a mere creature so bear the eternal wrath of God against sin as to deliver any from it. So it was, in the wisdom of God, that He appointed His own Son to take our human nature into union with His divine nature to be Immanuel, God-With-Us, God manifest in the flesh, He who is true man, perfectly righteous, more powerful than **all** creatures, and who is also true God. He alone is the fittest person to be Savior and Deliverer of sinners. It was the adorable wisdom of God alone that produced such a deliverer who was true and perfectly righteous man. So He had to be, since the justice of God requires the human nature that sinned to make satisfaction for sin, which no sinner could do for himself, much less, for others. It was then the wisdom of God which devised that the righteousness which would be unto all and upon all who believe would be the righteousness of God; His blood, the blood of God, which cleanses us from all sin; His sacrifice of His whole human nature in union with the divine Person, so that being true God, He, by the power of His Godhead, might sustain in His human nature the burden of God's wrath. In this way of **God's** unspeakable wisdom He gave to us righteousness and life! Thus the wisdom of God shines most in all its beauty and power in the gospel of God's salvation by Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of God is seen also in the persons God purposes to redeem, who are not all men. For not all men as perished in Adam are saved by Christ, but only those engrafted into Him, and who receive all His benefits by a true faith. As to that engrafting of only some into Christ, it must be understood that God in this way showing His sovereignty is no respecter of persons, for those redeemed by Christ are redeemed out of every nation, kindred, tongue, tribe and people. Further, He came not to call the "good," the "wise," the "righteous," but sinners to repentance.

The wisdom of God is seen in those He employed to preach the gospel. The gospel is called the manifold wisdom (sophos) of God.

(Eph. 3:10). But He did not use philosophers in the proclamation of the gospel; He used fishermen. For this glorious work God did not choose the princes of this world, nor worldly sophisticates. He chose men rough, crude, of mean station, in themselves weak, dull, slow-hearted. The world accounts it the greatest folly to choose these weakest, despised means to fulfil His will. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." (I Cor. 1:25). These lowly men had nothing in them but what God poured into them, so that their qualifications and their doctrine were divine. How could these instruments, devoid of all human advantages, refute Judaism, overturn heathenism, drive out demons, vanquish the world? They could not without the infilling with the mighty, heavenly power of God (the gospel). The weakness and nothingness of these instruments reveals that their employ and direction were by divine power, their doctrine from heaven, their wisdom from above. But look closely at these instruments, hear them proclaiming doctrine repugnant to the flesh, daring to preach Christ crucified to be believed in (foolishness to the Greeks!), denouncing idolatry and image-worship, exhorting their hearers to renounce the world with the devil and all his works; to prepare for afflictions in life, to learn self-denial and to hope for an unseen heavenly reward. See these instruments sealing this doctrine of theirs with their blood! Then do we not realize that this doctrine comes with no less authority than the wisdom of heaven?

Since God is His attributes, He is wisdom in His essence. When we say, "God is Spirit" (no article), we mean God is essentially Spirit. So with the truth, "God is love," the meaning is that God is love in His very being. So God is essentially wisdom; He is wisdom itself. He is wise not because He wills to be wise, but because it is the perfection of His nature to be wise. Three times Scripture calls God "the only wise God." (Rom. 16:27; I Tim. 1:17; Jude 25). God is all-wise. This means that God cannot be charged, in any way, or in any field of knowledge, with folly. God is pure wisdom.

Our Confession maintains that God is perfectly wise. Yet especially in the world today this is denied and held in contempt. The very first sin denied this attribute of God, both the devil and man assuming it to themselves. Since the Fall, lapsed man would not let God be only wise, but would share (usurp) His infinite wisdom. When God in His sovereignty could have limited man to the use of only one fruit in the garden, **he** could not deem it wisdom to have one single fruit denied him. But the person who does anything presumptuous like this reproaches the Lord (Num. 15:30), as though God is either defective in wisdom or unfair (unrighteous). Thus man sets himself up as a judge of the law (Jas. 4:11), as though he knows better than the law and the Judge of all the earth who always does right. Fallen man then says to God only wise, Thou, God art wrong. I am right! What man is doing here is flying in the face of wisdom to slap its face with his own folly. This is to imply that God has no right to maintain His law by issuing commands, that human reason should be good enough for God, and that His mind should give way to take a back seat to man's rationalism, man being perfectly able to govern himself. So modern man prefers his own guesses, or the suggestions of the devil, to the

commands and wisdom of God. Of course, as Christians, our opinions of God are different, aren't they? Not really, for although theoretically we acknowledge Him only wise, practically we often regard Him as foolish! Where a man becomes cunning in sin, the more cunning he becomes, the more he thinks to outwit God and the more he sins against divine, infallible wisdom. Failure or refusal to walk according to God's commandments is to say to God's face that He is foolish. It is to bring disgrace on His wisdom.

That church disgraces God's wisdom which cuts down preaching time to make place for choir singing, organ playing, healing services and opportunities for members of the audience at worship services to express their own opinions, none of which are the church's business. The same must be charged against those who continually neglect the administration and celebration of the Lord's Supper out of a sense of their own unworthiness. They want to be saved in the use of means, but these means are not the means of grace, but their own imaginings, not at all the means of God's appointment. They, too, disgrace God's wisdom who hold the "Shroud of Turin" is a miracle proof of Christ's resurrection, or that the picture of the Virgin of Guadaloup is miraculously produced and originated from heaven! In this way pictures of Jesus and images of saints are "pushed," and man becomes a perfect fool, a boob, in the very matter in which he would be thought wise! How much worse when a minister so disgraces the wisdom of God! This is to depart from Jerusalem, go to Babylon, or to Assyria, like "a wild ass alone by himself, not consulting God." (Hos. 8:9).

THE THINGS WE MUST KNOW

by Minard Kulikamp

There are three things that we must know
Would we be happy here below:
We must our sin and misery see,
And how we can delivered be;
True gratitude our heart must fill,
Our striving be to do God's will.

God's Word and Spirit must impart
A knowledge of our sinful heart.
Our lost condition then we see,
We're filled with grief and misery,
Contrite of heart, distressed within,
We plead, "O Lord, forgive my sin!"

We see the Christ, the Son of God,
As painfully the way He trod
To die for us on Calvary
And from our sin to set us free;
We see it now as ne'er before,
Amazed accept, rejoice, adore.

What can we do to show our love
And gratitude to God above?
We'll do the things that please him most,
Keep his commands whate'er the cost,
Acknowledge him in all our ways,
And praise and serve him all our days.

The Fruit of the Spirit Love
". . .AS I HAVE LOVED YOU"

by Mr. Don Doezema

There is, as you probably remember from your Junior High science class, a law of physics which declares that water seeks its own level. And if you don't remember learning about that "law" in school, you certainly know of it from easy and frequent observation. Think, for example, of the water in a teakettle. You expect to find the level in the spout to be exactly the same as that in the main part of the kettle. A water-guage on a steam boiler works on that same principle. Because water stands at the same level in connecting containers, the level of the water in the glass guage **outside** the boiler shows exactly the level of the water **inside** the boiler. At the risk of belaboring the point, think also of the use some cities make of high water reservoirs. From these reservoirs, located as they are on the highest hills in town, the water flows through mains. And since water reaches always for its own level, the water piped from the main into a house will rise in the house to all the faucets.

The same sort of thing can perhaps be said to obtain in the realm of the spiritual. **Life** seeks its own level. What does Romans 8:5 say? "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." That, so to speak, is all the higher they can rise, for the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). By contrast however, "they that are after the Spirit (do mind) the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5). Regeneration makes the difference of course. Those who are born from above see the kingdom of God. And of the very essence of that kingdom is that **Christ** lives in His people, in such a way that **His** life becomes **theirs.** Their life, therefore, to pursue the analogy, rises to a higher level.

That's the life of sanctification. And that life is not an optional thing for the child of God. It's not something that may be enjoyed by **some** children of God, while others experience nothing of it. Not only **must** the grace of sanctification reveal itself in the Christian, but it **will** do so. Just as you can depend on it that the spout of the teakettle can not remain empty when water is poured into the main part, so surely must the new life of Christ show itself in the walk of His people.

It's for that reason that I'm glad that the **Beacon Lights** staff decided that, in their proposed series of articles dealing with the fruit of the Spirit, attention should be paid to the evidence of that fruit as we see it in the life of Christ Himself. To do that is eminently practical, by the way, for, when we understand the underlying principles from which **Christ's** conduct flowed, then we will know what must be the governing principles in **our** lives. And I say **governing** principles advisedly, for what is seen to be a **law of life** for the **King** must become no less than that for the **citizen** also. There must, in other words, be a consonance of character, in the kingdom of God,

between the life of the citizen and the life of the king.

In the series of articles of which this is the first, we intend to deal with the various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit as they are enumerated for us in Galatians 5:22, 23. That the order chosen by the apostle in this enumeration is not an arbitrary one is evident already in his placing the fruit of **love** at the head of the list. Love is basic to all of the rest. Paul declares to the Corinthians that though a man be able to speak most eloquently about the things of the kingdom of God, yet, if he have not **love**, he like sounding brass — brass which, though it makes for plenty of sound when struck, is without life (I Cor. 13). Christ made love the very badge of discipleship: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). There can be little doubt therefore that we are dealing here with something which is fundamental to the life of a Christian.

What are the characteristics of this love? We agree with Arthur Pink, when he writes that "there is no safer and surer way of obtaining a right conception of the nature of Christian love than by making a thorough study of its perfect exemplification in and by the Lord Jesus." By "thorough study" he no doubt means a comprehensive survey of all that is recorded of the life of Christ in the gospel accounts. When one make that kind of study he sees that many elements enter into a love which is characterized (as we know Christ's to have been) by a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of its object. Mere human sentimentality and carnal pleasantries — these never characterized the love of **Christ**. Listen: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." "Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." It's clear that Christ's love was not only, for example, gentle (John 11:5, 6), patient (Luke 10:41, 42), self-sacrificing (John 15:13), and enduring (John 13:1); it could also rebuke and upbraid, be stern and uncompromising.

Nevertheless, in this and in succeeding articles dealing with the different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, I'd prefer to concentrate on a **single** episode in the life of Christ. Perhaps that will not prove in every instance to be feasible; but with respect to the fruit of **love**, the difficulty comes not in finding a suitable example but in selecting an especially fitting one out of all of the many demonstrations of the so-great love of the Savior as they are recorded for us in the New Testament Scriptures.

The love of Christ is, of course, nowhere more clearly illustrated than at the cross. We see there, first of all, His love for **God**. As the late Rev. Gerrit Vos wrote many years ago in the **Standard Bearer**, the cry of Jesus, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is really "the answer to God's demand: Love Me! Love Me, even when I make Thee experience My hell! Love me! Thou standest in the room of My beloved people, and they did not love Me. Now love Me in their stead, and do it in Thy very hell in this My darkness. And Jesus gives the answer: **My** God! **My** God! Oh, note that possessive pronoun. It is more than mere possession. In it throbs the love of Jesus for His Father, even while that

Father makes Him taste a hell such as devils shall never taste."

Such indeed was the love of Jesus for His God. And we do well to learn from His example also in this regard. How much "hurt" are we ready to endure because of our love to God? How much of what this world has to offer are we ready to deny ourselves because we love **God**?

But it's at the cross, too, that we see how great was the love wherewith Jesus loved **us**. Such a love beggars description, for He gave His very **life** — and, as the song writer has it, "for such a worm as I." Just think again of the circumstances which attended that sacrifice. He had been roughly seized in the garden, at which time he was also forsaken by His disciples, all of whom had fled into the night. He was abused by the Sanhedrin, condemned to die by the Roman authorities, nailed by wicked hands to the cross, and mocked and ridiculed by soldiers, chief priests, and passers-by alike. And all the while, by His own testimony, He had it in His power to call "twelve legions of angels" in His defense. For that matter, there had been a brief demonstration of the power He had over His enemies, when His would-be captors all fell prostrate to the ground before Him in that garden. But He suffered Himself to be taken. He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; and He hid not His face from shame and spitting (Is. 50:6). And He did all that for the great love which He had for His people.

One of those saints of His was hanging on a cross next to His own. A career of crime had brought this man to the cross. Tried in the courts of the land, he had been found worthy of death for having trampeled under foot the laws of men. By the Jews he must have been viewed correctly as an apostate from the faith. For not only had he shown himself to be without natural affection toward fellow **men**, he had most emphatically refused to bow before the law of **God**. In this man there had been no evidence of love, either to men or to God. In fact, the accounts both of Matthew and Mark suggest that he may have joined at first in the mockery of Jesus on the cross (see Matt. 27:44 and Mark 15:32). However that may have been, there can be no reasonable doubt that this man, who himself acknowledges in the end that crucifixion is for him the due reward for his deeds, must have been a hardened criminal, and one who stood condemned also before the tribunal of God. Had he known anything at all about Jesus, prior to this decisive moment on the cross, he would have had nothing but contempt for the prophet from Galilee. And the amazing fact is that Jesus **knew** all of that, **knew** that there was here an enemy of God and of His Christ, one who by his great and terrible sins had in effect shut himself out from the kingdom of God's Son (as do we all); and yet He **loved** him. That, I say, is an amazing love. Christ saw the one thief surely as an elect of God; but what we must remember is that He loved him (and us) **while we were yet sinners**. He stayed on that terrible cross to save from death those who **hated** Him. (What an example to us — who bear only with great difficulty the supposed grievances by which others affect us! Think of Jesus' parable of The Unmerciful Servant!)

At the time of the short conversation which followed between Christ and

that condemned criminal, the sacrifice of atonement had not yet been made, the price of redemption had yet to be paid. But the Father, as it were, "hands His dying Son a trophy of victory in the repentance of this malefactor." The power of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, wrought in the man's heart, so that what **was** hard as stone **became** soft. The effect was that the now penitent thief casts himself on the mercy of Christ. And that is never done in vain. "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

May we not only be filled with gratitude for the love which kept Jesus on the cross of Calvary, but also be inspired and energized by that love to love each other. May we **learn** Christ's "commandment," namely, "That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12). For it is indeed in our loving of one another that "His love is perfected in us" (I John 4:12).

The Fruit of the Spirit Love

LOVE

by Mrs. Mary Beth Lubbers

And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. I Samuel 18:1

The birds on the Judean plain still sang. The locusts whirred their dusty serenade. The soft evening breeze brushed the tops of the olive trees. But the poet in David, ordinarily so attuned to every nuance in nature, was aware of none of these. Every beat of his heart, every breath he inhaled, brought with it fresh pain.

"Saul is dead."

"Jonathan is dead."

The news was whispered to the farthest shepherd's hut in Israel. But though scarcely breathed, it passed from tent to tent until it pulsated in the land like a mighty drum beat. "Saul is dead. . .and his sons."

And while the Philistine courtiers published the triumphant news in Gath and their women danced with abandon in the streets of Askelon, memories crowded in over David's anguished soul.

"Oh Jonathan, my beloved friend, my spiritual brother! What words to express this grief?"

It seemed to David's troubled thoughts that it was only a short time ago that Jonathan had initiated their wonderful friendship. The special bond which united them stemmed from the day that David had killed that great Godless one, Goliath. David recalled with clarity that Prince Jonathan had followed him outside the royal trappings of Saul's temporary headquarters

in the valley of Elah and had made a covenant with him that very day—he, David, a mere farmer's son and Jonathan, son the the great King Saul and heir apparent to the throne.

Jonathan had observed David's lack of pride in this valorous feat, had seen David's look of disgust as Abner stood just inside the tent flap with Goliath's bloody head dripping from his hand, and had heard David's humble testimony in the tongue peculiar to shepherds that the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom Goliath had dared to defy had wrought HIS vengeance that day. And the heart of Jonathan had swelled with love and admiration for this lad.

Then, to seal the covenat which they had made, David recalled how Jonathan had stripped himself of his princely garments and accoutrements of war — his sword, his bow, and his girdle — and had given them unabashedly to him. Had Jonathan known already then, at the very outset of their unique friendship, that this "stripling" (to quote his father, Saul) was the "man ofter God's own heart?" Was not Jonathan, by this generous deed, already giving up his own claim to crown and kingdom for the sake of his friend David whom he esteemed more worthy? What an act of selfless, Christ-like love!

Moreover, Jonathan himself was a worthy and noble warrior. No one knew this better than David. Had it not been that the "Spirit of Jehovah seized upon David" (I Samuel 16:13), no one would have been more qualified both by upbringing and natural proclivity to lead Israel's army and occupy her palace than Jonathan.

Why! It had reached David's young ears while he was yet at his father Jesse's table of Jonathan's many heroic deeds in battle. David remembered how his brothers had related in glowing detail the time Jonathan had eaten a little honey and singlehandedly put the entire army of the Philistines to rout. Here was no palace-spoiled weakling, but a strong and wily warrior! And had Jonathan chosen to oppose David and to ally himself to the cause of father Saul's extermination of him, he, David, would have been up against a cunning and fearful adversary.

In retrospect, David could honestly confess that although he had never attempted to usurp the throne either by direct plot or by implication since the day Samuel had anointed him in Jesse's house, Saul had been keenly aware of the threat which David posed to his own son Jonathan's lawful claim to the throne. (I Samuel 20:31; I Samuel 24:20) How jealous of David Saul had been. Never had this jealousy been more blatant than when the evil spirit came upon him. During those times, jealousy prompted him to fits of demonic activity towards not only David, but also towards his own son, Jonathan, who aggraveted Saul to the point of madness by his seeming obliviousness to David's increasing popularity with the people. Yet, even while Saul called for David's death, Jonathan continued to promote David's advantage, always strengthening his hand. (I Samuel 23:16; The Heidelberg Catechism, XLII Q. & A. 111)

David recalled with wonder, how that even in this situation, Jonathan had the amazing gift of showing filial respect towards his deranged father — yet not acquiescing to his wishes — all the while maintaining utter devotion to his friend. What a pure and self-effac-

ing love! And this "spreading of oil upon the troubled waters" had greatly influenced David's own loyalty to Saul.

Even when Saul had become so demented as to take up the javelin against his own son, Jonathan had been fiercely angry not for his own sake, but because of his concern for David and the shame done to him. (I Samuel 20:34) Truly, Jonathan had to have seen the archetype Christ in David to have given him such self-sacrificing love and unswerving devotion.

Jonathan and David. Their friendship spanned all history as an example which, if we do not experience on this earth, we shall most certainly enjoy in heaven. Theirs was the classic summation of God's law, love your neighbor as yourself because you love Jehovah with your whole heart. Love your neighbor when you have nothing to gain and much to lose. Love your neighbor at great sacrifice to your own position and advancement. Love your neighbor even though it spells your own demise.

Then, David gave himself over to grief, and wept loudly as he had done many months before when he had parted from Jonathan in the field by the stone Ezel after the shooting of the arrows.

Now, what words to express such a loss? Once again, as in times before, the poet stirred within David's breast. Let it be decreed. Sing throughout the land to the farthest shepherd's hut this elegy of elegies:

"The adornment of Israel on thy heights thrust through!
Alas, the heroes have fallen!
Announce it not in Gath, publish it not as glad tidings in the streets of Askelon,
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised jubilee!
O mountains in Gilboa—no dew, nor rain upon you, nor fields of firstfruit offerings—
For there defiled is the shield of the heroes,
The shield of Saul, no more anointed with oil!
From blood of slain, from fat of heroes
The bow of Jonathan turned not backward,
And the sword of Saul returned not void [lacking]!
Saul and Jonathan, the loved and the pleasant,
In their life and in their death were not parted—
Than eagles were they lighter, than lions stronger!
Daughters of Israel, over Saul weep ye,
Who clad you in purple with loveliness,
Who put jewels of gold upon your clothing!
Alas, the heroes have fallen in the midst of the contest—
Jonathan, on thy heights thrust through!
Woe is me for thee, my brother Jonathan,—
Pleasant wast thou to me exceedingly,
More marvellous thy love to me than the love of women!
Alas, the heroes have fallen—
And perished are the weapons of war!" [1]

1 Alfred Edersheim, D.D., Ph. D., *Bible History: Old Testament*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), p. 152.

The Fruit of the Spirit Love
DEVELOPING LOVE

by Rev. R. Van Overloop

The title of this article raises a question. How can we develop love, when it is a fruit of the Spirit?

When love is called a fruit of the Spirit, then the implication is clear that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Agent Who works in us the blessings of salvation as merited by Christ upon the cross. This work of the Spirit in us produces fruit which becomes evident in every aspect of our lives.

But the sovereignty of God does not deny and has never denied man's responsibility. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16, 24).

We cannot give ourselves love nor can we give it to others. It is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ. But we can encourage or discourage this love which is within us. We can develop the fruit or we can quench the fruit of the Spirit (I Thessalonians 5:19).

But we, of and by ourselves, cannot even develop the fruit after the Spirit bestows it upon us. That too is the work of the Spirit. And this the Spirit does through the use of means. He does not treat us like so many pieces of rock, upon which He works. He uses us consciously, for the growth of our graces.

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Prayer is an indispensable means which the Holy Spirit uses to develop love in us consciously. God would have us pray to Him for the grace to grow in love.

"God will give His grace and Holy Spirit to those only, who with sincere desire continually ask them of Him" (Heidelberg Catechism).

Ezekiel 36 is a chapter of the Bible which most strongly states the sovereignty of God in our salvation. Yet this same chapter also states explicitly the necessity of prayer. Start reading this chapter at verse 21. Underline every time the words "I will" appear, just to emphasize to yourself the sovereignty of God. The conclusion is "I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it" (vs. 36b). But this sovereignty of God is harmonized beautifully with the Christian's responsibility when prayer is commanded in verse 37. "Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

So the development of love, as a gift of God, is through the Divinely-appointed means of prayer. So start by praying to God that He will give us love and that we may grow and increase in this fruit of the Spirit.

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Who is the object of this Love?

God is the first object.

It is also love of Christ.

Saints are also the object of this fruit.

Other objects of this love are the house and worship of God, and the truths of the Gospel.

And, in a sense, is not any man, as our neighbor, to be the object of our love?

There can and may not be any doubt but that God is the central object

of this love. Because we are given love for Him it follows that we will love Christ, fellow-saints, the Church and the truth. And loving God is not only why we can, but also how we can love our neighbor.

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From the above it is clear that if we are to speak of developing this fruit of the Spirit, then we must concentrate on developing our love for God. For, having improved our love for God, we will, at the very same time, be improving our love for the other objects of our love.

When we are loving God, we are loving the truth, our fellow-saints, and our neighbor. And we are loving them in the right way.

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What is the way by which our hearts may be made to love God? I John 4:19 ("We love Him, because He first loved us") shows the method of the Holy Spirit. He reveals the love of God to the heart, and then the heart loves God in turn.

If you desire to grow in love to God, use the method of meditating upon the great love of God to man. Meditate on God's love as described in John 3:16. Consider that it is such a vast love which gives salvation, in which the only thing required of us is that we be nothing and trust Christ to be everything (and even that trust He gives us as a gift of His Spirit).

If you want to repent, do not consider your sins as much as the love of Jesus in suffering for your sin. If you desire to love, contemplate (until it breaks your heart) the great love of Jesus Christ in laying down His life for His worthless foes.

One preacher put it this way. " 'Faith cometh by hearing,' and love comes by contemplation; it flows out of a sense of the love of Christ in the soul even as wine flows from the clusters in the wine-press. Go to the fragrant mystery of redeeming love, and tarry with it till in those beds of spices your own garments are made to smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia. There is no way of sweetening yourself but by tasting the sweetness of Jesus Christ; the honey of His love will make your whole nature to be as honeycomb."

If we wish to sustain the love we have received, we must do the same thing. Feed love on love. God's love for us is the best food for our love for Him, for the truth, the Church, and our fellow-saints. If we neglect this contemplation, then our love will die out as quickly as a fire without wood. The God, Who gives us the life of love, must keep us alive in it or we become loveless and lifeless.

And if our love has grown somewhat cold, we must do the same. We do not revive our love for God by doubting His love to us. Believe in God's love, for doubting is the death of love. Only by faith can love be nourished. Believe that God loves you still. Believe in the mighty power of Christ towards sinners and trust yourself with Him. And then His love will come flooding in our hearts.

Dwell upon the love of God to you, so you may feel intense love to God !

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By the way, there are also many practical implications here as far as the manner of our love is concerned.

If you love God, then show it as God showed His love to you. God loved the worthless; do likewise. God loved in Christ practically, so you and I must love not in word only, but in deed and in truth. God loved to self-sacrifice, so

must we.

Therefore let us love Him as He loved us. Let His love be both the model and motive to us.

FULFIL YE MY JOY

by Ellen Dick

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Philippians 2:1, 2

Do you have fellowship with others? Do you know what true friendship is? Or, are your associations with others that of "I like what you like and we get along good, so let's be friends?" Or, maybe you could ask yourself this—do you get along with and enjoy the company of fellow Christians in church? in school? Do you fight with, slander, or ignore certain of the saints?

It is a desire for unity that Paul expresses in Philippians 2, the first two verses. You will want to look those verses up.

It was a great joy to Paul to see fellow saints living in harmony one with another. Paul knew that where there was a lack of unity, Satan had a ready entrance into that church. So he tells the Philippians—live in harmony, and my joy will be complete.

But what is this harmony? First of all, Paul calls it likemindedness. We often think of it this way. I might meet someone at work or at school who likes the same thing I like. We have similiar tastes—maybe it's a mutual interest in sports, maybe we have the same hobbies, share the same classes in school, and so on. In addition, the two of us seem to be of the same temperament and have similar personalities. Someone who saw us might say that those two are likeminded.

Paul means much more than this here. Let's look up some other Scripture references to likemindedness. Romans 15:6 says "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God. . . ." What a beautiful example of likemindedness! The picture that comes to mind here is that of a choir that harmonizes so beautifully that it is as if it were one voice singing. All are bonded together in the Lord. Their common interest is the Lord. So, the saints stand, not as individuals, but as one body. Another reference we could use is I Corinthians 2:16. Scripture here tells us that we have the mind of Christ. To be likeminded we must have the mind of Christ. Certainly this excludes friendship and fellowship with those that care nothing for Christ. If we cannot glorify God with our friends, how can we possibly be likeminded? We must ask ourselves then the question, are our friendships true friendships?

The second thing Paul tells us that we need to live in harmony is to have the same love. Again, this is not the so-called "love" of the world. This is the love that only God's people enjoy, the love manifested in salvation. How great this love of God is! He has instilled a love for Him in our hearts, and so we love God with all that is in us. How? We walk in His ways and we keep His commandments. Certainly we cannot fellowship with those who do not keep His commandments for then we show ourselves to be enemies of God and His people. If you go out with a friend and sin against God in the name of having a good time, you can well ask the question whether you are being his friend or enemy. Only if two have the same love for God can they experience true friendship.

Having the love of God in us also reflects in our love for a brother or sister. Peter in his epistle tells us to "love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing." Is this a picture of us in our relationship with a fellowsaint? Loving the brother involves sharing his experiences. We rejoice when he rejoices. We truly suffer when he suffers. This takes hard, hard work. It takes time. It involves not a superficial, shallow relationship with the brother or sister, but we must be ready to open ourselves up, to share with him/her our deepest cares, joys, and concerns. It means you must express your love for that person and for your God. What a beautiful bond of friendship this would be!

Finally, Paul tells us that to live in fellowship one with another, we must mind the same thing. We must be of one doctrine. Now this doesn't mean that we say, "You believe what I believe, so we don't have to worry about being one in the Lord." We go to the same church so we assume everything is okay; there is nothing to talk about. This is what we often think, but then we are forgetting all about likemindedness and having the same love. Our doctrine also marks our conduct in this life. I Cor. 1:10 tells us to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the **same judgment**. We must be one under the yoke of Christ. How impossible to be yoked with an unbeliever or with one who professes Christianity but does not live it! How impossible to have true friendship with one who does not walk in a godly way! There is no harmony there. The yoke does not fit.

Choose as friends and love those with whom you can glorify God, those with whom you can express your love for God, and those with whom you can share a godly walk. Look for godly classmates, fellow church members, and friends. Don't shun them, slander them, or ignore them. We must remember that we are not individuals only, but members of Christ's body and must function as such. When we do this we experience the real joys of fellowship in the Spirit.