BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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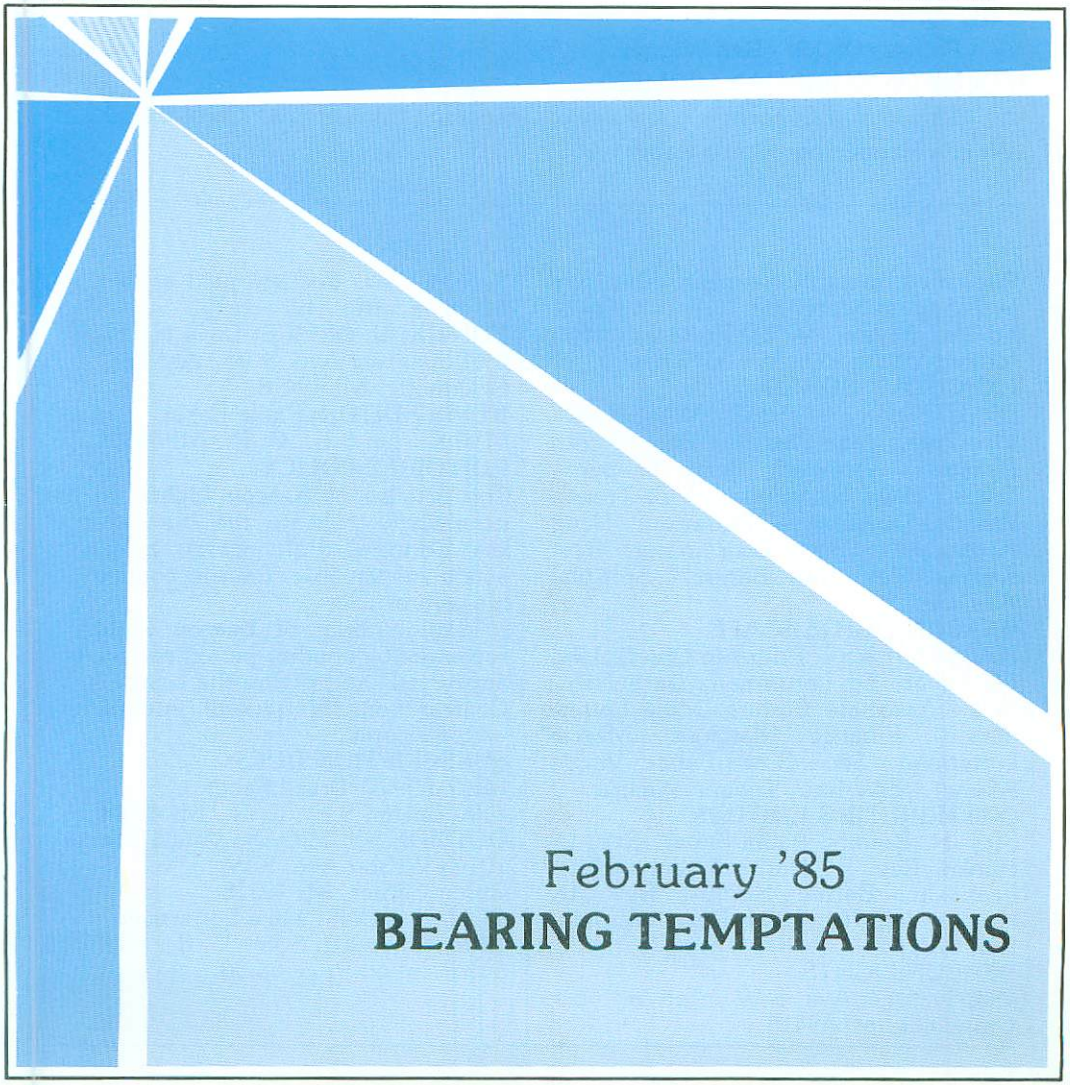

February '85

BEARING TEMPTATIONS

BEACON LIGHTS

Contents

EDITORIAL

A "Pure" Letter To My Grandchildren - John M. Faber 1

Esteeming One Another Better - Ellen Dick 4

TRUTH VS. ERROR

God's Spirituality - Rev. R. C. Harbach 6

Bearing Temptations - Rev. J. Kortering 9

CRITIQUE

Fulness Of Joy - Ben Wigger 13

FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN

The Joys of Conception: The Joy of Deepening Convictions - Carol Brands . 15

What's Happening - Paula Faber 17

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Editorial

A "PURE" LETTER TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

by John M. Faber

Dear Grandchildren:

O.K. children, turn off your radio or television set for a few minutes. I want you to put on your thinking caps - those with the built-in ear plugs to shut out outside sounds which might distract you. I want you to join me in thinking of the words pure, purity and purify. Ready?

The word **pure** has very many synonyms (shadow words) that I find- some twenty nouns, fifty adjectives and ten adverbs. That turns out to be quite a rich word, don't you think so? Some of them are, cleanness, faultless, un-polluted and spotless. The word **pure** basically means, completely or wholly.

Now don't give up yet. This letter does not intend to be a lesson in grammar, it means to be an exercise in thinking. Thinking. Have you thought of that exercise lately? Do you ever occupy your mind by just simply thinking? I'm sure you cannot be busy thinking while your ears - the avenue to your mind - are being bombarded with some of that mind-bending sound that comes from that thing I asked you to shut off. Have you done that? Good, then we can proceed.

You all know about what pureness is when it refers to air or water. Air sometimes is polluted when some toxic fumes are released into the atmosphere; or water can be polluted when some chemicals leak into the underground water supply. Then the polluted water and air are no longer considered to be pure.

Purity in the Bible has the concept of "un-mixture". Purity was the main element of the makeup of the instruments used in the Old Testament tabernacle worship services. All the shovels, spoons, forks, tables, candlesticks were made of pure gold, or were to be overlaid with pure gold. That gold was pure! No admixture of any alloys sand or glass. Nosirrie, only pure gold. Did you ever think of the reason for such restrictions? I think it was to show in a real sense that their Covenant God wanted to be worshipped with their undivided attention, their un-mixed love, their un-polluted worship.

Now if you think of the word **pure** in regards to gold you know that it means that it is completely and wholly made of gold. Then you cannot think of words like **purer, purest**. But how surprised I was when I found those words in Webster's dictionary! Now I cannot tell you that Webster is wrong, but I can tell you that I **think** it is. If pure means wholly and completely we cannot add an "er" or an "est" to it. If we have three pails full of water you cannot say one is fuller, or the other is fullest. I think that the only way to show comparison in purity is to say one is less pure, and another is least pure.

But that is only my thinking, I care not if you join me in that. But what do **you** think?

If you are still thinking with me, we are ready to consider some Biblical references to pureness. We sing from Psalm 24 in our Psalter number 57, verse two, that in order to draw nigh to God we must have clean hands and a pure heart. This we often sing in a less pure way, but God cannot be wholly satisfied unless our heart is pure. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus (speaking to a crowd of ordinary people) said, Blessed are the pure in heart. . . . And I think that you want to be included in that number. The Wise Man in Proverbs 20:9 said, "Who can say I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin."

So you see you have work to do. We have to obey God's Word to strive to enter into the narrow gate to come to Him. We have to purify our hands and our heart. We can do that also. Paul, in his epistle to the Phillipians listed a number of virtues, and one of them was something that was pure. He said of that list that we "should think on these things". You can easily see how that process works. If you constantly think of vile, dirty, sinful thoughts, your minds **become** vile, dirty and sinful. Conversely, if you constantly think of the virtues listed in Paul's Epistle your thoughts will be pure and your mind will **become** pure.

The Bible calls that activity, purifying. The Old Testament priests had to purify themselves and their clothes before they might enter the tabernacle to worship God. Even that wicked queen Esther went to great lengths to purify herself before she went into the august presence of her husband-king to make her request. How much more ought we to purify ourselves in order to enter the presence of our God to make our request known to Him. Surely we want our religion to be **pure**, don't we? One of the most terse definitions of pure religion is found in James 1:27: Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep unspotted from the world.

I'm a-thinking that my grandchildren may say that the first part of that definition can be left to their parents and grandparents, that this is aimed right at us. But I think that the second part is aimed directly at you as well as us. "Keep yourself unspotted from the world" is not an obscure order. No, it's very plain. But I will help you spell it out, will help you think what that means. Don't let the evil things of this world tempt us; I must not watch the world's evil movies on the movie screens in the theatre nor on my TV screen. Don't let evil communication spot my mind. Don't let filthy books and magazines pollute my mind. Oh, we meet up with so many "don't's" in our walk in this sin-cursed world. You can easily recognize them. Your conscience bothers you more or less when you indulge in those forbidden practices. LISTEN TO YOUR CONSCIENCE. That is the still small voice of God warning you of those spots of pollution.

The Apostle Paul in his great letter to the youthful Timothy writes, "Let no man despise thy youth. **Be thou an example to the believers** in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in **purity**." Did you get the thrust of that? Young Timothy was to be an example to other believers! There it is, children. It's all in a nutshell. The question might still

be in your thoughts why you are called to walk thus. I think it's because when we shall be purged at the end of time, we shall be clothed in pure white linen. Then we can enter that City of pure gold with streets of pure gold. That Eternal City through which flows the pure river of the water of life, as this is so graphically pictured for us in the last Book of the Bible.

Now you know of what I have been thinking, and why I wanted you to join me. I can almost hear you think, "I have no time for that. Maybe Gramps does, for he has lots of time now that he is retired." Right, I do have more free time than you. But I think that you can allot time for such serious thinking if you want to. Just before your bedside prayer; or some other time you may find. You be the judge.

Now, after reading this letter are you still eager to turn on THAT THING? Probably this would be a good time to think of, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Now that is not just a sentimental blurb, but the Holy Ghost inspired Paul to write it to the church at Phillippi for instruction in righteousness.

Then your nightly prayer will be asking for, "the promise of His coming, looking for the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Whereupon, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." II Peter 3:13, 14.

With love,
Gramps.

P.S. Happy to learn from you, Marcia, that you were also wondering about the angels. Glad to be some help.

G.

It's All Relative

Can you name the relatives?

1. Samuel's mother (I Samuel 1:20)
2. Saul's son-in-law (I Samuel 18:27)
3. Lot's uncle (Genesis 11:31)
4. Rachel's sister (Genesis 29:16)
5. Moses' father-in-law (Exodus 18:1)
6. Mary of Bethany's brother (John 11:1, 2)
7. Peter's brother (Matthew 4:18)
8. Laban's nephew (Genesis 29:10)
9. Moses' father (Numbers 26:59)
10. Jesse's youngest son (I Samuel 16:11-13)
11. Esther's cousin (Esther 2:15)
12. Abel's father (Genesis 4:1, 2)
13. Timothy's mother (II Timothy 1:5)
14. Joshua's father (Numbers 14:30)
15. Solomon's son (I Kings 11:43)
16. Priscilla's husband (Acts 18:2)
17. Jonathan's father (I Samuel 14:1)
18. Ruth's mother-in-law (Ruth 1:1-4)

ESTEEMING ONE ANOTHER BETTER

by Ellen Dick

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Philippians 2:3, 4.

In verses 1 and 2 of Philippians 2, Paul has exhorted the church to live in harmony one with another and to enjoy the blessings of fellowship by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one mind. Now he becomes more specific in telling us how we should treat a brother or sister in Christ. Let us look honestly at ourselves to see how we stand before these exhortations of Scripture.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory." What does it mean for a man to do things through strife? Let's look in Scripture to see if we can determine what Paul means. I Timothy 6:4, 5 speaks of a man filled with strife. "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. . . ." One who causes strife (or quarreling) is motivated by his own personal ambition. Such a man, as Paul says to Timothy, is interested in gain. He seeks to force his own opinion on others in pride elevating himself. How often we fall into this trap! We all want to be leaders, and everybody else to be followers. How often we want to run the show in Young People's Society or in school or elsewhere, because we like the feeling of pride, of power, in a leadership role. We don't like a back seat position. Our attitude provokes envy and quarreling among us. James tells us, however, that this leads only to confusion and every evil work.

Paul also speaks of vain glory. In Galations 5:26 Paul refers to vain glory along with provoking and envying one another. To be filled with vain glory is to delight in oneself. How often aren't we filled with a foolish admiration of ourselves and contempt for a fellow Christian! I often find myself doing this. I see a brother or sister and think, I am a better Christian than they are; I study the Scriptures more than they; I can discuss in society better than they can. Or, maybe I want others to admire me, and so I won't talk about God or His Word! I am afraid of being "too religious" or "too pious" before my friends. All this is vain glorying.

What is the remedy for this strife and vain glorying? Paul says it is humility. He then defines this humility

as in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than ourselves. How impossible this seems! We do not have equal talents. Maybe some of us are natural leaders or are more capable of different roles in this life. Must we ignore the gifts God has given us and in this way appear humble? First of all, to answer this question, we must understand our proper relationship to God. This puts things into a different perspective. God alone is great, not man. Also, how often don't we see that how God views His people is different than the way we view each other. Think of the verses in Matthew where Christ says, "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself at this child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Again and again Christ instructs his disciples that the first shall be last and the last first.

In the second place, we must understand that the gifts God gives us are given to us to be used, not to exalt ourselves, but to use in the service of God and His people. God does not judge us by the number of gifts we have, but rather by whether we use them to full capacity in His service. Surely when I look at myself I see how much I fail to use my gifts in His service, in the service of the church, and in the services of others. This is humbling in itself.

Let's think about this a little more. Most of you probably have jobs. Do you work during the week for yourself? for a paycheck? Or, do you use the talents you use on your job in the service of the church? Maybe in your job you have learned to love and serve old people. Do you use this talent also to fellowship with the elderly in your church? Maybe you do restaurant work and have learned to cook, to serve, to wait on tables. Do you also use this talent and experience in serving others away from your job such as church members, friends, or classmates? We often separate our day to day work from our active function as members of the church. We fail to use our gifts in service to each other. It is beautiful to see someone whose interest in life is serving his fellow saint.

Finally, Paul tells us that if we are to esteem others better, we will not look at our own things, but the things of others. In other words we can ask the question: How much time do we devote to ourselves? I Cor 13 tells us that love seeks not her own. The key is service—humbly washing each others feet, living the life of a servant whose main interest is to please another. This requires sacrifice on our part. It involves giving our time and energy, not for our own pleasures, but for the benefit of others.

Paul continues in Philippians by giving us the great example of Christ, the greatest of all servants. Just think. He came from the highest glory to live among men "in the form of a servant." We, on the other hand, are already unworthy sinners who are so filled with pride that we must **learn** not to exalt ourselves over others. This we don't learn just once but over and over again. Listen to Christ's teaching in Luke 22:26, "But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

Truly a Christian joys in his God and in fellowship with others. Have you experienced this joy? Is fellowship with saints something that you enjoy from day to day and week to week? How richly God blesses His people as they are active and busy in their service to their Maker and to each other.

Truth Vs. Error
GOD'S SPIRITUALITY

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"God is a Spirit" [Jn. 4:24a].

"Since you mention it, son, that was one of the first Scriptures you memorized as a small child. Do you understand something of it now?" "A little, I think, Dad. One of our teachers the other day handed out to us this 'xeroxed' sheet. Note the quote from the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England (1561), Art. I, "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness.' Also this, Dad: from the Westminster Confession (1647), chap. II, sec. I, 'There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure Spirit, invisible, without body, parts or passions . . .' " "Well, that's Reformed, beautiful, clear and plain, isn't it?" "At first our class thought it was plain, until we were assigned to read page 54 in the **Reformed Dogmatics**, where we were shown that Scripture speaks of the eyes of the Lord, His face, head, hair, eyelids, ears, nose, mouth, lips, tongue, back, arm, hand, finger, bowels, bosom, foot, heart, mind, will, spirit and soul. Also Scripture mentions God's affections and such feelings as, repentance, tender-heartedness, grief, groaning, desire (Hos. 6:6), love, pity, hate, anger, jealousy, joy, etc. So then, what is meant by these Reformed creeds where they state that God is without body, parts of passions? And, please, Dad, no long sermon!" Father lovingly rumpling and tousling his son's head at that remark replied,"So you prefer short answers to short questions, hey? Well, I'll try to be brief. These good creeds do not argue such things in God as materiality or change, but rather His spirituality. Where the Lord ascribes to Himself bodily members, He does so 'mindful of our human frailty' and finite capacity to teach us of His incommunicable attributes. So, His eyes represent omniscience and universal providence; His ears, omnipresence; His arm, omnipotence. Then as to His communicable attributes, His face represents intelligence; His heart, center of His being; His bowels, tender-mercy; His mouth, the revelation of His will; His nostrils, pleasure in and acceptance of our prayers of thanksgiving. But enough, for the moment. How's that for a short answer?" "Super, Dad; but would you mind repeating all that?" "Not at all, son; and for the benefit of your brothers and sisters as well, gladly I'll repeat anything as many times as you request." • • •

'But now look, young fellow. Where God is said to repent, we must understand that repentance is not properly in God. Repentance implies a lack of foresight, or ignorance of what could be a bad turn of things, a mistake that hindsight has caused to be regretted. God's repenting, according to Scripture, is nothing like this, since His foresight (knowledge) is infallible

(incapable of failure or error). The Bible teaches that in repenting God does will changes, yet at the same time He never changes His will. What this means is that God's repentance may never be thought of in a way that destroys His immutability! You're a pretty good catechumen—you 'dig' **immutability**?''

''Yes, I do; and **dig** is the word, Dad. We have to dig to mine out the meaning of God's attributes, don't we? Well, would what you've said apply also to God's feelings? Then there's no proper grief in God?'' ''That's correct. For God is the ever blessed, eternally happy God. Nothing can impair or diminish His firm and steady state of heavenly bliss. But just as God's repentance is God in His immutability willing change(s), so God's grief is His infinite holiness expressing His eternal aversion to sin and wrong. Now read to me out of your note-book something you've taken down in catechism class.''

''O.K., I have this: 'God, to help us understand Himself speaks to us in terms of our nature. There are many things in God which have a resemblance in us. There are similarities between us and Himself. So God speaks to us in terms of the body and of our feelings. From these we learn something of the nature of God.' '' Father responded to this with, ''Say, that's good enough to have typed and pasted somewhere inside your Bible! You'd better do that!'' ''I will. But Dad! Isn't there a problem here? The Scriptures speak of God having bodily parts and emotions, while these two Reformed creeds deny He has 'body, parts or passions'! That's a little hard for me.'' ''I understand, my boy. Well, you're learning to think. But the answer to your problem lies in what I said awhile ago, which I'll repeat.'' Father then did so beginning with, ''These good creeds . . .'' adding, ''Also go back to read and re-read that note I recommended imprinting in your Bible. Remember, too, that these **figures of speech**, descriptive of God and His actions, are to be understood spiritually!''

''I guess our teacher in Christian High knows the real meaning of Jn. 4:24. He told us that there were heretics in the fourth century known as Anthropomorphites, who believed that God exists in a body.'' ''Glad you're learning that. Yes, and those heretics are still with us in the Mormons.'' ''I know; we had a couple of classes in school on Mormonism. Know what? Mormons believe 'God is an exalted man, once a man on earth as we are now' with 'a body of flesh and bones.' ''

''Incredible, isn't it? But that heresy cannot stand in the face of, 'God is a Spirit,' which, in the original language, reads something like this: 'Spirit is God.' Notice, the predicate object comes first and the subject last. We could translate, if you remember the pastor's lately preaching on this, 'Essential Spirit is God.' God is essentially Spirit, not having a body; not having a figure, flesh or dimensions of a body. God is more spiritual than angelic or human spirits. He is 'the Father of spirits.' ''

''Dad, talk about 'waters to swim in' (Ezk. 47:5)! I'm close to drowning in the depths you're getting me into!'' ''Oh, you're only wet behind the ears yet. Now answer this question, What attribute of God do the Mormons deny with their God-has-a-body-of-flesh-and bones heresy?'' After some profound thought for a moment, the response

came, "Is is God's invisibility?" (cp. Belgic Confession, Art. I). "That's it! A body can be seen and handled, as Jesus taught, 'Handle Me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have' (Lk. 24:39). But as for God in His essential being, 'no man hath seen nor can see' (I Tim. 6:16).

"So when Scripture speaks of God's eyes and arm, what does that mean?" "As you say, Dad, God's omniscience and omnipotence are presented under these figures." "Very well put! and remember that Scripture makes clear that God's eyes are not eyes of flesh (Job 10:4), and that His arm is no arm of flesh (II Chron. 32:8); nor does God literally have feathers and wings (Ps. 36:7). In fact, even when it is said God 'comes down' (Gn. 11:5), the meaning is that He makes a new approach to man with more of His Self-revelation.

Later, on a Sabbath, father and son were discussing the impossibility of pictures of Jesus (God). They appealed to the passage in I Timothy where it is said, God dwelleth in inapproachable light, so that no man (human being) has seen or is able to see God. How could inaccessible light be pictured? or penetrated in order to see and "paint God"? How can any material substance represent pure Spirit? How could any picture of Jesus present Him in His simplicity, eternity, infinity, invisibility and incorruptible being? "Son, I wouldn't like a picture of me that presents me far less than I really am, would you?" "I think I get your point, Dad. No, I wouldn't. Aren't pictures of Jesus, then, an insult to Him?" "They certainly are. Like 'common grace,' contrary to, and debasing of, God's nature! Really, all this is to ascribe to God our corrupt nature. Therefore such pictures (along with Romish statues) are lies (Jer. 10:8, 14). God's glory must not be sunk into such sham and nothingness. No picture of Jesus would be as honoring to Him as a representation of our President would be in the image of a frog!" "Oh, I get it, Dad. That was the very sin of the Israelites, wasn't it, when they tried to represent God by a calf!" "Exactly, son; the sin of disgracing the spiritual nature of God!" "Then, Dad, doesn't the artist who produces these pictures of Jesus (or even of saints) have in his mind in the first place unscriptural, unworthy and unspiritual conceptions of God?" "So true! and very good, young man. I could hardly put it better myself. No human imagination can represent God. Therefore our natures are inclined to wrong ideas of God. We are by nature of the same idolatrous bent as Aaron, Laban, the Philistines with their fishy Dagon, and Jeroboam, who with the apostate Israelites, 'changed their Glory (their God!) into the similitude of an ox' (Ps. 106:20)."

At this point Mother joined the conversation, stating that "whatever thought comes into our mind, we must not think, '**That** is God!' We must rather say, 'This is **not** God.' For we must let God tell us Himself in His own Word what He is. If we do not do this, if, instead, we cling to 'pictures' (such as people hang on the walls of their homes, or the walls of their minds), if we hold false teaching (like 'common grace', the worst of all), then with these idols we corrupt the worship of God. Then in the house of God we would be polluting the pure worship of God. 'God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' "

BEARING TEMPTATIONS

by Rev. J. Kortering

Temptation! The very word strikes fear in our hearts. They are the times in our lives when we as young people could make a terrible mistake. Some of these mistakes are terribly costly.

It's Friday evening, you are out cruising around with a car full of guys. Next to you at the red light, a cool cat pulls up. He rolls down the window and challenges, "Wanna eat my dust?" Hot flashes pulsate in your neck. A scramble of thoughts race through your mind. Oh yes, temptation is real. Later that same evening when the hours get long and boring, someone suggests you crash a party. You aren't sure what lies ahead, but once in the door you can tell at once things aren't what they should be. The smell of beer is pungent, the loud laughs confirm your suspicion, the rest of the guys are already in the wrong mood. Again you face temptation. You sit around a bit and fidget, stalling for time. You see a gal you know and decide to make conversation. You figure your way out is to suggest she leave with you. Both depart. Driving along, deciding what to do, presents more temptation. English Leather and Aviance gets pretty heady, hormones flow and alas, more temptation.

It is not sin to encounter temptation. It is wrong to deliberately expose ourselves to temptation, yet the fact we are tempted is not sinful. Our Lord Jesus was also tempted. What we do with temptation is the serious part. Yielding to temptation and giving in to our sinful desires is wrong. The consequences of such conduct is costly, always costly. Sometimes, it seems to cost more, such as diseased bodies, minds blown by drug experiments, pregnancies.

This passage however, tells us how to bear temptation. Listen, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it," I Cor. 10:13.

The word is translated correctly in our King James Version. True, the same Greek word is translated either as temptation or trial. Yet, the context makes plain that temptations are intended. The Apostle Paul is dealing with sin and its effects. Fact is that such temptation may indeed be trials. What is the difference? Trials are sent from God, they are hardships in our lives, they serve to strengthen us spiritually. An example of this is Abraham on Mt. Moriah, offering his son Isaac. Temptations are from an evil source, the devil, or our own sinful flesh, even ungodly men or weak

Christians may tempt us. The purpose is to cause sin, hence to attack and destroy faith. Such a temptation presents an occasion to sin.

How can a temptation be a trial? When God Himself suffers us to be tempted. We must emphasize that God does not tempt anyone, He does not present an occasion to sin with the intention to cause sin. He is the holy God and despises all sin. James 1:13 reads, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." God suffers us to be tempted when He allows the devil to tempt us. Consider Job. God challenged Satan whether he considered Job, a righteous man. Satan retorted, no wonder he is righteous, he is rich and has everything heart desires. God said, "Behold all he hath is in thy power, only upon himself put not forth thine hand," Job 1:12. Job lost everything, yet he said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, naked shall I return thither, the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," Job 1:21. Even Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil". Why would God suffer us to be tempted? The answer is varied but has this common idea, to purge us from sin and show to us our need to depend upon God. Consider Simon Peter. He thought he was so strong he even said, "Though all forsake thee, yet I will not". Jesus said that Satan would sift him like wheat. God suffered that to take place in order that Peter would learn to be humble and wait upon God. This was evident when Jesus restored him to apostleship at the Sea of Galilee, "Simon Peter, lovest thou me more than these?" All Peter could say, and that three times, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I like thee. Through the way of yielding to temptation, he learned humility.

The point is that we do not desire that! We do not want to learn in such a hard way. Peter had to weep bitterly. If we yield to temptation, it means guilt, terrible sleepless nights. It means that sin will tear our lives apart. Diseases such as AIDS, herpes, and such like are epidemics. Babies conceived out of wedlock are aborted or cared for in increasing numbers. Future plans of study and saving money are thrown aside when these things happen. Today, yielding to the temptation to experiment can cost a young person his life, maim himself either physically or psychologically for the rest of his life when he drinks or experiments with drugs.

Scary? To be sure.

Yet the passage here tells us that these temptations are common to man. Two things are involved here. They are common to man because they are rooted in the depravity of man's nature. The effect of Adam's fall into sin is that all men are tempted through their own nature. We have a mind, yet our thoughts can be sinful, and pride may lead us to deny the truth. We have the physical side of our nature, the need to eat and drink; these too can become the occasion for sin. Also our natural sexual desire can become sinful lust. Our emotions can lead us astray; fear, doubt, as well as boldness and joy can occasion sin. The heart is deceitful above all things. No wonder then, temptation is common to man.

As a result, the second idea is that temptations have been experienced by men of all times. This is emphasized in

this chapter of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. In the preceding context Paul reminds them that Israel of the Old Testament was tempted in the wilderness. This temptation came from the carnal element in her midst. They had been influenced by the idolatry they saw in Egypt. In the wilderness they turned to the golden calf and commited idolatry. This led to fornication in its worst sense. They also tempted God by their murmuring about bread and lack of meat. The Holy Spirit applied this to the Corinthians. They too are tempted to commit idolatry, to turn once again to the idol gods from which they were converted. Associated with such idolatry was the worship of Venus and its thousands of prostitutes. Some in the church had returned to that former life and in doing so they tempted God, they murmured against the strict Christian life. We do well to listen to these same warnings. We also are tempted to turn to idol gods, the riches and pleasures of this world. With it is the terrible sexual license manifest in our day. Murmuring against Christ is common place. Note also, that the source of this temptation is from the carnal element within the church. It was that way in the wilderness, in Corinth, and today as well. Always there are those who are brought up within the church, Christian home and school, who reject the way of obedience and go along with the evil of the day. They present temptations to the faithful covenant young people.

Such temptations are common. We may not say as Christian young people, "We have it worse than anyone else; no one understands our temptations," and use that as an excuse to give in to temptations. Each generation must face these temptations, it may be a difference of degree, yet the temptations are the same, they are common to man.

This passage gives us reason to take courage. We do not have to deal with temptations in our own strength, "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it." This word is for you young people as you struggle. There is no sweet assurance for young people who deliberately walk in temptation and sin. In the chapter Paul warns that those who persisted were destroyed by the destroyer, vs. 9 and 12. Such young people must receive the admonition of the word and if need be the sword power of Christian discipline. The blessed gospel is for those who are truly Children of God.

How do we know ourselves to be sincere? In this Corinthian epistle, Paul reminded them they are, "called to be saints with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ," (1:2). He goes on to explain that theirs is the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This is ours to no small degree. We have a goodly heritage as young people. It is our privilege whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we do all to the glory of God, (10:31). Just think, we are predestinated to be God's children, Christ shed His precious blood for us, we have received the good news of the gospel from our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit rejoice in true faith, believe these promises, and have the right to everlasting life.

How then can we bear temptation? In two ways. One sure way is to resist the devil, to say "no" when evil confronts us. This is God's way of escape. By His indwelling grace we are able to put down our own nature which delights

in sin, deny ourselves, crucify our own flesh, and walk in obedience before God. We don't want to sin against God; we know that this forms a barrier between us and God; guilt is a burden and we would rather be free. Keeping God's law is freedom. Far more glorious for us, is to deny ourselves drunken pleasure, fornication, derision of things holy, and the evil consequences that are involved, and to enjoy our young minds, strong bodies, youthful zeal in a way that carries God's approval and blessing. The second way of bearing temptation is by repenting of sin when we yield. This too is important, because we often yield to sin. When this happens we cannot sleep at night. Guilt plagues us and we are tormented. Sometimes we fear that God will forsake us, we are so filthy and undeserving in our sins. The amazing wonder is that God delivers us from the consequence of yielding, by receiving our heartfelt confession and forgives us for the sake of Jesus' blood. This too is precious. God truly loves us and understands. We have an high priest who was in all points tempted like as we, though without sin. He takes our plaintive cry to our heavenly Father and intercedes for us and through Him we are forgiven.

Add to that this assurance, "God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear". That has special meaning. We are indeed tempted sorely. In these last days, see vs. 11, temptations abound. It seems that the wicked are more open with their sins and glad to talk about them, to display them before the public, to brag about them in their conversation. There are people who will gladly lead you into sin round about you everywhere. There still are whorehouses, but young people are tempted by the very people they work with today, the gal on the job, the fellow at the place of employment is looking for someone to smoke pot, to have a fling in bed, to go to the X-rated movies and what have you. It is as the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, the days of Noah; the world flaunts their evil and calls us to come along.

We are weak. We are curious, we sometimes like to know what it is like to go along.

God will not suffer us to be tempted above we are able. God will not allow temptations to be so great that we will completely fall from Him, deny our faith, turn from our Christian upbringing, and forsake God. He will cause us to be victorious over them.

He uses means to that end. We must be careful that we do not deliberately expose ourselves to temptation. To follow the strange woman is to cause our flesh and body to be consumed, see Prov. 5:11ff. To play with fire is to be burned. To overcome temptation we must pray fervently and stay close to the Lord in our devotions and quiet times. We need the wisdom of His Word, we must attend to worship and fellowship with God and His people. This will help us to be spiritually sensitive to sin and to love the way of God.

God blesses these efforts and He gives His grace to those who truly seek Him. He is faithful! For this reason we turn to Him for our spiritual needs. We turn to Him when we have failed to seek forgiveness. He will never let us slip from His arms that love us.

Temptations! Fearful to even think about.

Our God is faithful! This gives us courage to face life and the joy of serving Him.

Critique

FULNESS OF JOY

by Ben Wigger

When you read the Word of God on a regular basis, you never know what you will notice about it. The Word always seems to speak to a very specific need that you have. Or it makes you notice certain things about your life that you may not have noticed before.

Such was the case with me recently. One verse in the 15th chapter of John stuck in my mind. The 11th verse: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full".

A joyful heart is something we as Christians should have. Christ intends that all of His saints should indeed have it.

At first glance joy and happiness may seem to be the same, but they are not. There is a fine line between them. Having a joyful heart does not mean that we are always happy and never sad.

Happiness is governed by the things that happen to us on a day to day basis. When nice things happen to us we are, of course, happy; when bad things happen, we are sad. Happiness is always in a constant state of flux. Today happy, tomorrow sad, depending on what takes place. Joy is different. Joy is just as real in bad times as in good. It is the feeling of peace and gladness we have because of our relationship with Christ. The primary difference between joy and happiness is that one is grounded in circumstances, the other is grounded in the Lord.

Joy is a case of knowing that God is on His throne, that He is in control of this creation in good times as well as in bad. Joy is that inner assurance we have that He is in control and that in His infinite wisdom and goodness He does all things well. Joy has its roots in the power, in the wisdom, and in the goodness of God.

God does not promise us that we will always have sunshine and never rain, or that nothing painful will ever happen to us or touch our lives. We are going to have our share of these troubles like everyone else. What God does promise is that we will never be tested beyond our point of endurance and that He will comfort and strengthen us by His grace in our tears.

Happiness is like the surface of a lake, it is in constant change. One day we are riding the crest because all is well, the next day we may be down

between the swells because of pain or stress in our lives.

Joy is like the deep below the waves on the surface. A storm may be raging on the surface, but in the deep there is calm.

Just consider the example of Paul given to us in God's Word. Paul wasn't bubbling over with happiness all the time. But his heart was always full of joy. He wasn't clapping his hands when his enemies were stoning him at Lystra. He wasn't happy about being arrested and beaten at Philippi. Even though his back was swollen and sore from being whipped and his feet were fastened in stocks, he still had the joy of the Lord. At midnight he and Silas burst out in songs of praise.

You know the history of Paul as it is recorded for us. He experienced too many trials to be happy all the time. Three times he was beaten with rods. He lived in constant danger of being robbed, and his own countrymen hated him. He experienced weariness, painfulness, hunger and thirst. Yet Paul could say with all his heart: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice". Paul rejoiced in the Lord; in who He is, in the love He has shown in the blessings and inheritance which are ours in Him.

And that is where we get the joy in our lives as well. We joy in the Lord because of who He is. He is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. He is the source of all comfort, wisdom, beauty, mercy, peace, life, love, and joy.

We rejoice in the Lord because our sins have been forgiven and our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. If God would mark our sins who could stand? If He gave us what we deserved we would go to hell. Instead He chose to save us and forgive us our sins; could anything give us more joy than that?

Possessing joy doesn't mean we are happy, happy, happy all the time. Christ wasn't happy all the time. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. In the garden of Gethsemane His soul was sorrowful, even unto death. But joy was present in spite of this. The joy of knowing what He was going to accomplish gave Him strength in His hour of grief. It enabled Him to say "not my will but thy will be done". Joy is constant in bad times as well as good. It doesn't evaporate when trouble comes, rather it strengthens and lifts us up.

Hebrews 10:34 tells how the early Christians took the seizure of their goods "joyfully". Job stood in the ashes of what was once a great fortune and said: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord". Job 1:21

Christ's disciples were arrested and beaten, yet they left the council rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Joy doesn't draw its strength from things, it draws its strength from the Lord. "When thou passeth through the waters", He says, "I will be with thee. . .when thou passeth through the fire thou shalt not be burned". He is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we need not fear though the earth be removed, we need not fear though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. He has shown us the path of life, in His presence there is fullness of joy. At His right hand there are pleasures forevermore. In good times and in bad, the Lord Himself is with us. He is the never-ending source of joy.

The Joy of Deepening Convictions

by Carol Brands

There are various ways of stating a certain truth concerning growth in the Christian life. How many of these expressions have your heard?

"If you don't **use** it, you **lose** it."

"We are either progressing or retrogressing."

"No man is an island."

"The more you give, the more you receive."

"Eating without exercise kills a man."

Or, a favorite of mine remembered from a bank's billboard:

"There was a man—they called him mad—the more he gave, the more he had."

In various ways, these and other sayings get at a truth which is very important in the Christian life. We cannot ever be stingy and close-lipped and isolated in our Christian lives and still experience Christian growth. To grow in our Christian lives, we must **share** the things God gives us. . . materially, but also spiritually. We must be generous with the truths of God, sharing them and sharing them and sharing them. Otherwise we stagnate and, like a stagnant pond or puddle, kill all life and growth. **Proverbs** puts it this way:

"The generous soul (both materially and, especially, spiritually, CB) shall be made fat."

This is one of the areas in which children lead parents into new blessing and joy. Children are a daily, hourly, constant source of responsibility in sharing the truths of God's Word and the Christian life. As a parent—father or mother—trains his children in knowledge and understanding, his own knowledge and understanding grow. He finds he has to search out, constantly, new truths of Scripture, and thus in training his children he is led more and more into deeper knowledge as well as to convictions and to love of God and God's Word. God uses the training of our children to develop us spiritually.

Now, it is true that this kind of spiritual development won't happen automatically just because we are parents. Rather, parentage is one of the means God uses to cause His beloved children in Christ to develop. It happens only as we take seriously the spiritual responsibilities which we have towards our children and earnestly desire to work and carry out these responsibilities. If we do **not** earnestly strive to train our children, then the opposite will be true: we shall not develop and grow in grace but instead go backwards, become more calloused towards sin and worldiness, love God and the Bible less. To grow spiritually, it must be said of us as it was of Jesus' mother, Mary: "She kept all these things and pondered them in her

heart."

What are some of the ways in which training produces spiritual growth?

Picture a Christian mother (or father) holding in her arms her first newborn baby. I cannot imagine this scene without certain emotional responses being present. If you are a mother, recall once how many of these thoughts were present when you were alone—or with your husband—following your child's birth. If you are still unmarried, think once about how you may someday feel with your own baby.

☐ Response 1: Humility. What a gift is this child! Who am I to be given such a gift? This child is God's child! What a wonder that God has given me a child of His to train! I am not worthy.

☐ Response 2: Prayer. "Father, as thou hast given us this child, give us also the wisdom and understanding to train him. Help us to fight our own sins so that we may not be an example of sinfulness but of godliness. Help us to learn Thy Word better so that we may instruct him properly in Thy fear."

☐ Response 3: Resolution. As the Baptism Form says, we resolve by God's grace to train up this child, as far as in us lies, in true doctrine and holy living.

☐ Response 4: Training. How young is the child when instruction begins? Only minutes. As soon as the Christian mother holds her baby, she begins to speak to the child of those things dear to her. She whispers of her longings for his spiritual welfare, of his need to learn to know God. The child understands nothing of her words but already, immediately, understands the love in her voice, and quickly responds to the attention and care he receives. Training begins immediately, at birth.

☐ Response 5: New understanding. God uses the parent-child relationship over and over in Scripture to illustrate the relationship He has with us, His adopted children in Christ. As we experience the love we have for our children, the concern for their sins, the grief we have when they disobey, we learn by this parallel also to realize more and more how God loves us and deals with us as His children. And as we also study how He deals with us in His Word, we learn by His pattern how to train our children as He desires.

Examples from Christian homes illustrating these points could be endless. I once wrote a letter to my mother describing somewhat my feelings following the crib death of our three-month-old baby, Janelle, in 1982. To illustrate the point I am making, I would like to share this same experience with you who are reading this.

Our Janelle was a baby who was born prematurely so that she stayed in the hospital nearly a month, and when sent home she was on a monitor because of a breathing problem called apnea. The response to this situation was a watchfulness and care for that baby which greatly exceeded the care we had given our other babies, much as we had also loved them. But I saw certain changes in Janelle which greatly impressed me. When she came home from the hospital, she was an extremely uptight and tense baby, screaming for all she was worth at every small need; by the time she died, two months later, she seemed an entirely different infant, relaxed, trusting, barely whimpering when she had a need. She had learned that there was help for her needs, people who loved and cared for her; she had learned to trust.

And from her, I learned. I learned

to realize over again that this is also the startingpoint for our Christian lives: we must know that we have deep needs to be met but that we also have a heavenly Father Who in love meets our every need; we must like a child trust Him. If we don't have first this basic relationship of **trust** in our Father, we have no basis for development in our love of Him, either. Janelle taught me a new dimension to our love and trust of God our Father.

Any Christian mother could give you many examples of similar situations in her parental experience (if she thought awhile, anyway). I've heard mothers say that they never knew the Bible until they had to teach it to their children. Teaching our children to pray leads us to renewed conviction to be more faithful in our own prayer lives. Hearing sinful words or ideas from our children usually confronts us with our own sin, the source of their sinful thoughts. . .and we are convicted to fight our sin more faithfully. Nor may we miss the encouragement which we receive from godly responses from our children—but I hope to stress this in the next article.

Growth in love of God, in knowledge and fellowship with Him, **is** our joy and source of all secondary joys. The Bible says that we are sanctified through the Word of God and prayer. And so, as training our children leads us deeper into Scriptural study, into prayer, into firmer convictions and faithful living, we are led into greater joy also. Such joy is God's gift to us, given as one of the fruits of the Spirit, given in many circumstances, and given also as we faithfully train His children. There is great joy in faithfulness.

May God grant us consistency of doctrine and life so that our training and our lives blend together in steadfast love and conviction to His eternal glory.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Paula Faber

NEWCOMERS:

God Blessed:

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Looyenga, of Southwest Church, with a son, Jared Ross, on September 26.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Kuiper, of Southwest Church, with a daughter, Michelle Joy.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Rau, of Southwest Church, with a daughter, Dawn Marie, on October 1.

-Mr. and Mrs. B. Meelker, of Redlands Church, with a son, Brent Jacob, on July 6.

-Mr. and Mrs. C. Van Meeteren, of Redlands Church, with a daughter, Tarah Elaine, on September 2.

-Mr. and Mrs. K. Rietema of Southeast Church, with a daughter, Ashley Joyce, on August 7.

-Mr. and Mrs. G. Te Slaa, of Doon Church, with a daughter, Karla Ann.

-Mr. and Mrs. A. Van Bemmel, of Doon Church, with a son.

-Mr. and Mrs. L. Hoekstra, of Doon Church, with a son, Nathan Eric, on June 24.

-Mr. and Mrs. P. Veitch, of our Bluebell Mission, with a son, Robert Montgomery.

-Mr. and Mrs. J. Lanting, of South

Holland Church, with a son, Seth James.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Reyenga, of South Holland Church, with a son, Matthew John.

-Mr. and Mrs. L. De Jong, of South Holland, with a child.

-Mr. and Mrs. K. Vooys, of South Holland Church, with a daughter.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Huizinga, of Grandville Church, with a son, Steven Alan.

-Mr. and Mrs. E. Lotterman, of Grandville Church, with a daughter, Holly Jo.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Feenstra, of First Church in Holland, with a daughter, Danielle Sue, on September 12.

-Mr. and Mrs. C. Reitsma, of First Church, with a daughter, Jodi Lynn.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Kooienga, of First Church, with a son, Kyle.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Doezema, of First Church, with a son Keith.

-Mr. and Mrs. A. Ter Avest, of Faith Church, with a daughter, Stephanie Lynn.

-Mr. and Mrs. H. Vander Waal, of Hope Church. with a son, Thomas Henry.

-Mr. and Mrs. C. Kalsbeek of Hope Church, with a daughter, Anne Marie.

-Mr. and Mrs. E. Kamps, of Hope Church, with a son, Aaron Eugene.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Tanis, of Hope Church, with a son, Andrew Jay.

-Mr. and Mrs. T. Van Overloop, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Heather Marie.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Schut, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Shauna Lynn, on October 12.

-Mr. and Mrs. M. Dykstra, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Amy Lynn.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Venema, of Hudsonville Church, with a daughter, Melissa Joy.

Rev. and Mrs. J. Slopsema, of Randolph Church, with a daughter, Brenda Kay.

Rev. and Mrs. Koole, of Redlands Church, with a daughter, Audra Joy, on September 11.

-Mr. and Mrs. D. Kraker, of Hudsonville Church, with a son, Ryan Dale, on December 16.

-Mr. and Mrs. R. Miedema, of Hudsonville Church, with a son. Ben Randall.