BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XLIV NUMBER 3

March '85

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY

BEACON LIGHTS

Contents

Editor's Comments - David Harbach 1
FOCUS ON CHRISTIAN WOMEN
The Joys of Conception: The Joy of Family Fellowship - Mrs. H. Brands 2
TRUTH VS. ERROR
The Trickery of Error - Rev. R. C. Harbach 4
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT
Happiness is. . . - Don Doezema 7
Joy - Mary Beth Lubbers 12
Developing Joy - Rev. R. Van Overloop 16
What's Happening - Paula Faber 18

Published monthly (except June-July and August-September are combined) by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Bruce Klamer - Pres.; Mike Rau - Vice-Pres.; Jane Pastoor - Sec.; Karen Dykstra - Vice-Sec.; Jerry Kuiper - Treas.; Dave Ondersma - Vice-Treas.; Brenda Langerak - Librarian; Doug Kooienga - Youth Coordinator; Rev. Kamps, Rev. Van Baren - Spiritual Advisors

BEACON LIGHTS STAFF

David Harbach - Editor-in-Chief; John M. Faber, Ed Lotterman, Gary Nienhuis - Associate Editors; Mike Lotterman - Finance Manager; Marcia Lotterman - Sec.; Grace Faber, Vonda Klamer, Mike Rau, Thelma Westra

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Mrs. H. Brands, Paula Faber, Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. R. Harbach, John Kalsbeek Jr., Bernie Kamps, Rev. D. Kuiper, John Ten Haaf, Dean Wassink, Ben Wigger

BEACON LIGHTS
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B.
Grandville, MI 49418

Second Class Postage paid at Jenison, MI (USPS 046-840)

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Dave Harbach
4930 Ivanrest Ave. S.W., Apt. B,
Grandville, MI 49418

NEWS EDITOR: Paula Faber
4190 Burton S.E., G. R., MI 49506

EDITORIAL POLICY

The articles of **Beacon Lights** do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.

If any material of **Beacon Lights** is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source.

Contributions of general interest are very welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION DUES:

MICHIGAN: Grace Faber
4190 Burton S.E., G. R., MI 49506

OUTSIDE MICHIGAN: Vonda Klamer
10143 Wilson Ave. S.W.,
Byron Center, MI 49315

COLLECTIONS: Douglas Dykstra
7928 Parklane, Jenison, MI 49428

Subscription Price $5.00

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

by David Harbach

In this issue, we focus your attention on the second fruit of the Spirit, "Joy." "Happiness is . . ." by Mr. Don Doezema centers your attention on the life of Jesus Christ, "Joy" by Marybeth Lubbers takes us back into the life of God's people during the time of Ezra when Zerubbabel called for a day of celebration because the foundation for the new temple had been laid; and Rev. Ron Van Overloop encourages us to be brightened by thoughts of Christ in, "Developing Joy."

In May D.V., we plan on seeing three more articles by the above authors on the third fruit of the Spirit, "Peace."

Rev. R. Harbach has finished his series on the attributes of God. His article "The Trickery of Error" on the purpose of the work of the ministry precedes his next series of articles on the epistle of Jude.

Mrs. Brands ends her section, Joys of Conception in Focus on Christian Women, with "The Joy of Family Fellowship." We appreciate the written contributions Mrs. Brands has made for the Beacon Lights and look forward to seeing some more of her articles in the near future.

Please note that our new treasurer is Doug Dykstra. All collections should be sent to his address. The address of the Federation Board's Librarian, Brenda Langerak, is 0356 Begole St. S.W., Grand Rapids, MI 49504.

HELP WANTED

You are a personnel manager looking for experienced help. Who would you choose to fill these jobs?

1. A publican or tax collector. _____ (Matthew 10:3)
2. A seller of purple cloth. _____ (Acts 16:14)
3. An interpreter of dreams. _____ (Genesis 41:15)
4. Spies. _____ and _____ (Numbers 14:6)
5. Fisherman brothers. _____ and _____ (Matthew 4:18)
6. A tiller of the soil. _____ (Genesis 4:2)
7. A husband and wife tentmaker team. _____ and _____ (Acts 18:1-3)
8. A prophetess and judge of Israel. _____ (Judges 4:4)
9. A trio to lead congregational singing. _____, _____, and _____. (I Chronicles 15:19)
10. A cupbearer for the king. _____ (Nehemiah 1:1, 11)
11. A mighty hunter. _____ (Genesis 10:9)
12. A chamberlain or city treasurer. _____ (Romans 16:23)

The Joys of Conception

Focus on Christian Women

THE JOY OF FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

by Mrs. Brands

The object of this series is to discuss various joys which accompany, by God's blessing, the training of covenant children. **Usually** these joys are present in the diligent training of God's children. But we recognize that situations differ, also by God's design, so that one family may experience one joy more keenly and another joy less. While the nature of each experience is different, it is nonetheless the goal to discuss joys which are pretty well intrinsic in covenant conception and childbearing and therefore universally applicable to Christian parents.

When I first considered this series of articles on joy, I hesitated as I considered this article because it seems there are so many homes in which this joy is not experienced. Children seem to resent parents and parents seem to criticize and be embarrassed by their children so that it seems that Christian fellowship is so often missing from Christian families.

But the more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that while Christian fellowship may often be lacking in our homes, that only means we need to stop and think about it and change things, for such fellowship ought never to be lacking. . .in fact, it is essential and basic to our family lives as Christians. The Christian family life must always reflect the relationship between God as our Father and ourselves as members of His Church. The heart of God's relationship with us is His covenant love, revealed in His mercy through Jesus Christ and experienced as daily fellowship, walking daily with our God. If we are to know and experience this covenant love and fellowship with God, then our homes must also mirror that fellowship.

And, actually, I find it hard to believe that any truly Christian home will not have some degree also of Christian fellowship. All of our ideals are marred by sin in this life, that is true, and so we will have no perfect home, no home in which parents always rule in love and children always respond in love, resulting in perfect fellowship. Such perfection doesn't exist. Yet our homes do have a beginning of such fellowship; they must have this or they can hardly qualify as Christian homes.

Let me give some illustrations of family fellowship.

At a very early age, already at age two or three, children can learn to sing. Do not discredit the value of singing; it is of great value in the Christian life as both a builder of Christian ideals and also as a young expression of faith. When a parent hears his child singing the songs of Zion, often hour after hour, even though he knows he has

taught them, the parent receives in response a joy which is deeply thrilling. There is godly fellowship in singing.

Very early, just as early as learning to sing, a child begins to pray. While his prayers are still childish and immature, mimicking and repeating the words of his parents without a great deal of thought on his own, nonetheless the sincerity and earnestness with which he prays often puts adult casualness to shame. We must be careful to insist on such sincerity when a child's warfare with sin exerts itself, but proper training usually results in very sincere prayers in our children. As a child thus unconsciously witnesses to a simple trust in God as his Father, the child is also encouraging and witnessing to and fellowshipping with his parents.

As a child develops in understanding, even while still very young, the response he gives to parental instruction can be thrilling. The basic desire of a child is to please his parents and this can early lead to a basic desire to please God also. I am, for example, sometimes amazed how even small children can already **prefer** to use Sunday in ways that please God. When I have commented about some activity my children wanted that it really did not fit Sunday because it did not lead to learning to know God better, but when in the weakness of my flesh I have said I would still allow it because they were children and needed something to do, **they** voluntarily gave up that activity and found a more profitable activity to replace it. Such a response in children is a form of fellowship which is to a Christian parent both humbling and a cause of deep gratitude for God's grace seen already in early years.

Such response in life can grow with the years. How thankful parents can be when their children resist and rebuke the sinful words or conduct of their peers. . .or else, should they be the ones rebuked, if they admit their wrong and change. How thankful they may be to see their children confess wrong-doing at any time, knowing this is contrary to our proud flesh. And how thankful they may be when, either voluntarily or with adult guidance, they enter sincerely into discussions of spiritual things. Such discussions can have some depth already in very young years and can be heart-warmingly meaningful as the child matures into a young adult.

My children are still young and so I cannot write from personal, parental experience about the fellowship which occurs between teenage children and parents or between adult children and parents. But I can realize it from my experience as a daughter and from my observation of other parents and the relationships they have with their children. Wherever parents in love faithfully train their children, and wherever God graciously works the response of faith in the children, the relationship between parents and children is that of genuine and deep fellowship, parents thankful for their children and children thankful for their parents.

What a joy! When such fellowship occurs, all earlier sorrows of conception are forgotten completely. The pain of birth, the difficulties of training the children, the labors in the home. . .all these are gone forever. The joy of fellowship deepens and continues through life.

May God grant such fellowship in Him to our homes.

Truth vs. Error
THE TRICKERY OF ERROR

by Rev. R.C. Harbach

"The work of the ministry [is] for. . . [the purpose] that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto Him."
[Eph. 4:12, 14, 15].

Without the work of the official ministry of the Word as established in the true church, instituted according to Scripture with ordained minister, elders and deacons, we have no protection against "the trickery of error." The work of the ministry in the pure preaching of the Word is for the purpose of edifying (building up) the Body of Christ. In fact, we could put it this way: The work of the ministry **is** the edifying of (the Church) the Body of Christ! So that in those church buildings where the body of Christ is never edified, then no work of the ministry is there. That work is not going on there. This goes for certain nominal Protestant fanatics who lay claim to secret, inner and extra-biblical revelations from the Spirit. They speak of "a word of knowledge" which is suddenly flashed into their minds by a direct revelation from God, entirely apart from the sound guidance of the Word of God written. This fanaticism inflates them with the pride of being far above the rest of us who have only the revelation of Scripture. Along with this pride goes that super-pious exclusively private reading of the Scripture whereby they regard the ministry of the church unnecessary.

Many do not really belong to a church in the official sense of the word. They go to a "chapel," or a "gospel hall," or they belong to an "assembly" (a term they prefer in their aversion to the very word **church**). After about ten or fifteen years of that sort of religious life, they show no signs of spiritual growth. They have been deceived and misled in what they call "Bible teaching" or "church truth" by their own misconception of "rightly dividing the Word." Mistaking their shallow biblical scheme and erroneous distinctions for depth, after many years they are still like a child, an adolescent that is not half man. Calvin says, of those who never grow in the grace, nor in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, that "after a man is once past fifty, it seems he decays both in his understanding and his memory."

We, when it is well past harvest, ought not to be still like green grapes actually going bad on the vine. So the apostle exhorts us "that we henceforth be no more children." Children must be carefully nurtured like little lambs through a stage of instability and liability to being deceived and led

astray. In their unsteadiness they are like a ship with neither rudder nor gyroscope. Waves and wind toss and sweep it along almost keel up. The Hebrews writer exhorts, "Do not be carried about with divers (various) and strange doctrines" (13:9). James, agreeing, pictures the unstable person "like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (Jas. 1:6). It is, therefore, dangerous, even cruel, for a child, being only a little lamb, to be left to itself to choose its own religion and its own course of education. Would such a child ever know of what faith it ought to be? Would it ever, in a whole lifetime, hit upon the Reformed Faith? No, but it would be tossed up and down by the confusing winds of Evolutionism, the public school's state religion of Secular Humanism, or by the world-wide waves of Pelagianism and Arminianism, to say nothing of the subtle, deviant breezes of Eastern Mysticism now sweeping away those addicted to "Rock music."

But the world today is so very scientific, isn't it? The world is directed by a scientifically developed technology, isn't it? Beware! Avoid "antitheses of pseudonymed science" (I Tim. 6:20, Gk.). Calvin warns us that this wretched world (it is **wretched** despite its boasted development of a modern, futuristic cosmopolitan civilization) has been misled and beguiled, and still is, by popery. Have we not heard via the news media the blind followers of the pope brainlessly singing his praises in the blasphemous, perverted ditty, "He's got the whole world in his hands"? The world is like a highly educated, mature, finely polished gentleman? It is more like an inebriated teen-age idiot speeding his sports-car pell-mell along the wintry, icy freeway of "down-town" to the junk heap it will soon become. But, again, as Calvin said, "you young people and little children understand that you have a Father in heaven." You know, too, "that because He is our Father, He will not lay our sins to our charge, but receive us in His love through His own free goodness, accepting us for righteous, when in true repentance we condemn ourselves, and seek all our welfare in Jesus Christ. . ." But we would never do this where there is no "work of the ministry."

But notice that those who are only children spiritually are liable to be tossed topsy-turvy by "the sleight (literally, "the dice-playing," or underhandedness) of men." Few adults, much less children, are competent to compete with professional gamblers whose business it is to know and use a vast store of tricks. Then who will disagree with Calvin when he says that in this occupation "there is neither honor nor honesty," and adds, "it is known that all dicers are deceivers." Young people, it will be wise for you to keep this well in mind. For spiritually, in the world of religion, there is much of this sleight of men, much spiritual "dice throwing." (Cp. modern evangelism in its appeal to the chance contingencies of Free-willism). Besides, there are plenty of scoffers and deceivers always seeking to pervert and subvert our faith. (Cp. a "Moonie"-owned newspaper and a Mormon-owned magazine). The air is full of choking spiritual pollutions and thick with the fiery darts of heresies, enough to poison and corrupt all men along with these deceivers and deceived. Where there is no "work of the ministry" of the Word in the pure preaching of the gospel within the

God-ordained instituted church, there is no well-grounded faith, no walking in God's truth, no standing firm for any good whatever, no watchmen on the walls of Zion. There is no knowledge of what we would call our doctrinal ABC's. What they have had of the ABC's of the Bible they have forgotten, and so cannot seriously be said to be beginners.

Then for them things become worse. As children they get carried away by "the cunning craftiness" of false apostles, false witnesses, false brethren, false teachers, false prophets and false Christs. Then they fall into error, and error, being evil, is incubated and produced in the atmosphere of moral evil and spiritual corruption. (Here we could name well-known nation-wide names.) False prophets, for example, are self-centered, bad, deceitful, the most obstinate of them being unquestionably malignant. (Consult almost any chapter in **Larson's Book of Cults.**) Their "cunning craftiness" is carried on by deception and treachery. For a clear picture of this fatal evil, read the intriguing story of the underhanded machinations of the Arminian Remonstrants in the book, "The Voice of Our Fathers."

Relative to that "cunning craftiness," it is added, "whereby they lie in wait to deceive." The Greek reads, "by the (crooked) dice-throwing of men (and) cunning craftiness, with respect to the trickery of error." This trickery presents the picture of a slinky panther engaged in its sly, cunning, deceptive **method** of stalking. The false Christs of our modern day are as malignant as a panther, silently yet relentlessly stalking its helpless prey. This is the evil of **error** (the word not translated **error** here, Eph. 4:14, but it is in seven out of its ten appearances in Scripture). For a dynamite exposure of "the trickery of error," read Valdis Fisher's "Children of God."

Modern "evangelists", you may notice, preach a line quite similar to the "Rejection of Errors" recorded in our Canons of Dort. This means that they do not preach the Five Points of Calvinism, but principally the Five Points of the Remonstrants. They preach what we might call a "Semi-Pelagianism" or a so called "evangelical Arminianism." One of them has condemned the doctrine of Unconditional Election on coast-to-coast radio. Another often takes little digs, especially at the Reformed churches, but also at the Reformed Faith. Still another, nominally Presbyterian (and therefore in name **Reformed**) admits to abandoning the Calvinist position to oppose it "tooth and nail." Their Arminianism is closer to Roman Catholicism than to the Protestant Faith of the Reformers. Some are sharply criticized for their associations with theological modernists, religious liberals and the false ecumenical movement. For some have left their former strict separatist position and now compromise with Romanism, Modernism and New-Evangelicalism. But they are all Arminians and preach an Arminian "gospel."

How do we escape this "trickery of error" and cease being spiritually childish? By speaking the truth in love to **grow up**, which growth toward spiritual maturity is growth unto Him. We do this only in that sphere where growth is possible, in the true church, where there is the demand for, the reception of and the preservation of the means of grace. The work of the ministry preserves us against the trickery of error.

The Fruit of the Spirit
HAPPINESS IS. . .

by Mr. Don Doezema

That love, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, and other of the fruit of the Spirit were manifest in all their perfection in the life of Christ goes almost without saying. But what about "joy"? One is inclined to wonder if we might perhaps be hard pressed to discover even a single **occasion** for joy in all the work of the Savior. He was, after all, the Sin' ss One. . .in a world of sinners. The carnality even of His closest disciples, therefore, must have been a daily source of grief. Besides, as our Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper has it, "he bore for us the wrath of God (under which we should have perished everlastingly) **from the beginning of his incarnation, to the end of his life upon earth.**" He was indeed a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3).

But what did that mean for Jesus' **life**? Did this "man of sorrows" ever find reason to smile? Did He ever **laugh**? Did He have a sense of humor? A certain Ralph Kozak, of Traverse City, Michigan answers most emphatically in the affirmative. In fact, Mr. Kozak is making a living selling plaques, paintings, linen, jewelry, buttons, T-shirts, and posters, all with screen or half-tone prints of a portrait of a laughing Jesus. He even has a copy of this painting on the wheelcover in the back of his motor home. And for an All Michigan Catholic Charismatic Conference recently he produced a full-color, ten-foot by twelve-foot painting to hang over the main stage. It was a picture of that, I think, which appeared also in the Religion section of the **Grand Rapids Press** last September. There it was — the familiar representation of the bearded face of Jesus, but with the head tossed back, eyes shut, mouth open wide — a belly laugh if there ever was one. This, says Kozak, "presents another, brighter image of Jesus." The painter wants to remind people that Jesus was a human being who "enjoyed life and laughed when he was happy, just like anyone else." But the incongruity of it all was made the more apparent in that the huge painting was hung so that the border of the side toward which the laughing face of Jesus was turned touched, of all things, a crucifix.

Apart now from the propriety of depicting the face of our Lord in **any** fashion, the painting by Mr. Kozak strikes one immediately as being particularly inappropriate (read "offensive") because it misses entirely the real nature of Jesus' **enjoyment** of life. Did Jesus have a "sense of humor"? I suspect so. Did He ever laugh with His disciples? Probably. Were there lighthearted moments in Jesus' conversation? Surely. I cannot believe that Jesus, in all of His dealings with His family and friends, was a humorless

individual. But what of that? Does a laugh of Jesus tell us anything about what it was that gave Jesus real **pleasure** in His walk among men? No. In fact, what brought the most joy to the heart of Jesus, that which gave Him the most pleasure, was not at all a laughing matter.

• • • • • • • • • •

All men, we may be sure, seek after happiness. They are drawn by pleasure. But few there be who know where to find it. In fact, it belongs to the misery of our fallen nature that we find ourselves drawn not by the best pleasures but by the worst. Earthly riches? To those who have them not, it might seem that one could easily be happy if only he had the wherewithal to obtain for himself the things of this world. But, if earthly riches do not "make themselves wings" (Prov. 23:5), they are soon found by those who possess them to be neither a source of joy, nor yet a shield against the vicissitudes of life. Family and friends? But, if they are not found often to be a disappointment, a circle remains intact for only a relatively short time. A boy friend or girl friend, perhaps? But, how often does it not happen that one of the pair "falls out" of "love." A good job? But, if one does manage to maintain his hold on it, he learns soon enough that this work too can become burdensome. A nice car? But what is all the rage today becomes obsolete tomorrow. Each earthly thing seems to beckon, "Joy is found in me." but, one after another they disappoint. Men nevertheless go on seeking today the very things which yesterday deceived them. Young people too (and perhaps especially) pursue pleasure. And seldom do they pause to inquire seriously what true happiness is and how it can be acquired. Young people of the world know nothing of it, of course; but how sad it is that, in the church of Christ, our own experience of it is so limited!

• • • • • • • • • •

Perhaps you have observed that I've used the terms "joy," "happiness," and "pleasure" as if they were interchangeable. I meant them to be that. It happens that we're dealing, in this series of articles, with "joy" as it belongs to the fruit of the Spirit, as that in turn is set forth by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5. And, it may be true, as Calvin points out, that "joy" in this context denotes "that cheerfulness towards our fellow men which is opposite of moroseness." But for our purposes here I've chosen to take it in the broader sense of Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." ". . .joy in the Holy Ghost." "Not in meat and drink. . . ." We cannot help but think of the word of God through Habakkuk the prophet: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall the fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:17, 18). That joy will come to manifestation of course in one's relationship with his fellow men. One cannot, after all, boast of a joy in the God of his salvation, and then succeed in casting a shadow wherever he goes. But that joy which is visible to others is first of all something that fills the **heart**. What **is** it? It's clear from Scripture that it's something that does not arise out of a particular set of circumstances, is not to be associated

with a certain personality or temperament, and is unaffected by a change in fortunes. "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (Phil. 4:4) is an admonition that comes to **all** of God's people. But what exactly does it **mean**, positively, to live a life which can be characterized by the fruit of the Spirit which is "joy". If we wish to be counseled in this regard, there is no better teacher than Jesus, and there is none better than He after which to pattern our life. So, once again, we look to what the Scriptures tell us of the life of Christ.

• • • • • • • • • •

Imagine for a moment, if you will, that you have been for a whole year in another state or country, far from many of your friends and relatives. Suppose too that on your way home for a short visit your car breaks down, some 90 miles from your destination, and, not having money enough to take advantage of public transportation of one kind or another, you choose simply to walk the rest of the way. The trip therefore is a tiring one, and, what's worse, it follows on the heels of a year of deprivation, of living on a tight budget, of sleeping here and there, availing yourself of opportunities for room and board as they presented themselves. A relief it is therefore at last to settle into the home of well-to-do friends for a short stay. You look forward to a nice warm meal, and to sitting around the dinner table exchanging tales of the fortunes and/or misfortunes which befell you and them during the time you were apart. Dinner time comes, however, and you find yourself handed a cold turkey sandwich and a glass of milk. What kind of welcome is **that**?

Well, Martha was going to see that that didn't happen to **Jesus**. An honored guest He was in her house. She knew too the truth of His own characterization of His life, that though foxes have holes and birds have nests, He often had not so much as a place to lay His head. She knew that He had to contend regularly with enemies who dogged His footsteps. It must have been clear from the very lines in Jesus' face that the travel, the preaching, all the work involved in His ministry, had taken its toll during the months since she had last seen Him. And now He was under her roof. She was determined that the hospitality He received there would be second to none. So she set about preparing a meal fit for a king. We might say, in fact, that Martha was busily engaged in the service of **the King**. And in that service she was intent on doing all within her power to give to her Lord, Whom she so dearly loved, the greatest pleasure possible while she had the opportunity.

On the surface it would appear that Martha's efforts were highly commendable. But the rest of Luke's account of this incident makes it clear that she was nevertheless **mistaken**. And from it we gain some insight into what it really was that gave Jesus the greatest pleasure, and who it is that is most pleasing to Him. Read on.

• • • • • • • • • •

Martha had a sister, Mary, who seemed not to share her concern for service to the Master; for all the while that Martha was hurrying to and fro in her preparations, Mary sat idle, listening to Jesus. To Martha's way of thinking, Mary was being quite inconsiderate of her sister in that she left her to do all of the work, and inconsiderate, more importantly, of their guest, Who deserved the most gracious hospitality. Evidently Martha, as time passed,

became increasingly annoyed that Mary made no move to help in any way with the preparation of dinner, for at last she said to Jesus, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Quite unprepared Martha must have been for the gentle rebuke which she received from the lips of Jesus. "Martha, Martha," Jesus said to her, "thou art careful and troubled about many things." Ah yes, so she was. She had been bustling about, hurrying from here to there, and worrying lest something should go wrong and dinner might not come off just right. Yet, was that not **proper**? **She** surely thought it to be so. What could possible be **wrong** with what she was doing?

Jesus continued. "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken from her." So Mary was right yet after all. But what was that "good part" which she had chosen? It was this: she "sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word." The words of Jesus were the words of **life**; and when He sat down to teach, as He did on this visit to their home, Mary gave her undivided attention to what He had to say. Very likely she was oblivious to all that was going on around her, to all of those preparations which, no matter how important they might be in themselves, could **wait**. Her sister Martha, so engrossed in the preparations for dinner, had missed her Lord's teaching. Mary, being so engrossed in her Lord's teaching, had missed the preparation for dinner. And Mary's choice, Jesus said, was the right one.

• • • • • • • • • •

What was it that gave **Jesus** the greatest pleasure? We learn of that more precisely from another incident. Jesus was at Jacob's well, in Samaria. It was high noon, and Jesus sat at the well, "wearied with his journey," thirsty for sure, and no doubt hungry as well. His disciples had left him, to go into the city to buy food. It was during their absence, as you know, that a woman of Samaria came to the well, and Jesus availed Himself of the opportunity (divinely appointed) to give long and fruitful instruction, both to the woman and also, later, to other Samaritans who, prompted by the woman, hurried out to the well to hear this prophet from Galilee. His disciples meanwhile return and, to their great surprise, find that Jesus is not in the least interested in food. They had left Him, as we said, tired and hungry; and when they return they find Him refreshed and declining to eat. Mystified, they urge Him to take food; but He responds by saying, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." That's it — "meat to eat." But what was that? The disciples at first surmised that, while they were gone, someone had come along and had given Jesus something to eat. He had no more appetite therefore (so they thought) because His hunger had been satisfied. But that was not at all the case. Jesus had **not** eaten in their absence. And yet He was not any longer hungry. Why not? "My meat," Jesus explained to them, "is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Not only does He mean by this that the present business so pressed upon Him, so absorbed all His attention, that it displaced His interest in physical nourishment, He means that His mind and heart are so taken up with the will of the Father that the doing of it, in a figurative sense, **is His food**. That is, there is nothing in

the whole world which brings Him more pleasure, nothing in which He is more cheerfully employed, nothing which brings Him greater joy than doing the will of His Father. Not bodily comforts, therefore, not earthly possessions, not any of the mundane affairs of this life, but the Kingdom of God – this is what gives to Jesus His greatest joy. This accounts for the fact that one would be able to find Him, perhaps often, in the middle of the night, not asleep in a soft bed, but on a mountain, alone with His Father in prayer. This accounts for His deriving more pleasure from giving instruction to Mary than in enjoying a feast at Martha's table. This accounts for the fact that His whole ministry was characterized not by a being served by, but by a serving of, His brethren, to the point at last where He gave His very life a ransom for many.

• • • • • • • • • •

Yes, Jesus Himself found His own personal joy in doing God's will. He found His greatest pleasure in secret communings with His Father. And, note this, He takes pleasure in those who do the same. We learn that from the instruction He gave to good-hearted Martha. The church today is full of Marthas. It's full of people who find themselves faced with a multitude of thing to do – things which apparently demand their attention. A good share of that "multitude of things" might even be what we like to call "church work." And oh how we like **that**. It gives an air of legitimacy, after all, to our lament that we just don't have time for personal Bible study and prayer. We are too busy with our school work (either teaching or learning), too busy with the work required to earn the money needed to feed the family, too busy washing diapers and cooking the meals, too busy with the work of elder or deacon or Sunday School teacher, too busy for personal, sweet communion with God. Legitimate pursuits they all are. No doubt about that. But to allow them to distract us from the good thing which Mary pursued is the result of a conscious decision to content ourselves with the kind of hustle and bustle which characterized Martha's service. And that's a mistake. It's a mistake first of all because, would we serve the **Lord**, we do well to pay close attention to the kind of "service" which is pleasing to Him. (Note, in this connection that He did not say to Martha that, though she had chosen a **good** thing, Mary had opted for a **better**. He spoke instead of Mary's sitting at His feet as "**the** good part.") That for one thing. But it's a mistake also because by it we are robbing ourselves of that which God assures us in His Word will be the greatest joy possible this side of the grave. It is only when we walk with God, in the light, that our hearts can be truly joyous. In fact, as has been well said, communing with God is nothing less than heaven begun on earth. Would to God that we might **learn** that – by daily experience.

1985 SINGSPIRATION CALENDAR

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

The Fruit of the Spirit
JOY

by Mary Beth Lubbers

But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

Ezra 3:12 and 13

For as far as the old man could see in this glaring sunlight, the long strung-out caravan wended snake-like along the rugged landscape. For many weeks already, the returning exiles had been traveling in this fashion—and they were still a long way from their destination. First, Zerubbabel, a prince of the house of David, and Jeshua, a grandson of one of the last high priests to serve in the temple; then the Levites, followed by the temple singers, players, and the temple servants; finally, the thousands upon thousands of lay people, trailed by the beasts of burden and the herdsmen and servants to tend them.

The old man leaned heavily upon his staff as he paused for a few brief moments to regain his balance and catch his faltering breath. How fast and irregularly his heart was beating! How blistering was the sun—and it not even noon yet! How harsh was the terrain! The old man wondered if he would be able to persevere in this arduous trek back to Jerusalem, since stragglers such as he had to fend for themselves, keeping apace as best they could. Once in a while, the very old persons, like himself, were privileged to ride for a short time on a burden-bearing animal such as a mule, an ass, or a camel. Mostly, however, the old as well as the young had to walk, for every spare animal was needed to carry back the supplies and those precious treasures which had been taken from Yahweh's House some seventy years ago—the dishes, the bowls, the cups, and the goblets. Now, Cyrus, in a surprisingly gracious edict, had given these back to the exiles for use in their temple in Jerusalem. Lost in his musings, the old man lagged farther and farther behind, shuffling along apathetically.

He was old. He wasn't even sure how old. He only knew that he had to be at least fourscore years because he remembered well the sacking of Jerusalem. He recalled with clarity how he had thrown a huge rock at his dark-haired captor. And he remembered as if but yesterday how the Babylonian soldier had thrown back his head to laugh, not deigning to draw his sword on such an insignificant one saying, "Look how this young one fights. He'll make a splendid soldier in our army." Then, holding his obvious rippling strength in check, the soldier had

cuffed him but lightly, even so sending him sprawling against his Mother's doorsill.

Even now, the old man was embarrassed as he recalled his own feeble resistance on that memorable day. What a futile attempt that had been—one small, feisty boy resisting the well-organized Babylonian army. And yet, the old man knew by the clenching of his free fist and the tightening of his gnarled hand on his staff that given the same situation, he would resist and fight all over again—puny though his efforts would be. For to be a captive, and that in an alien land, was most painful to the proud and freeborn Jew.

In all his seventy years in Babylon, the old man had never felt at home. Many of his compatriots had had no difficulty "settling in" in Babylon and even now were plying their lucrative trades in that God-forsaken country. They had no intention of leaving the comforts and prosperity that Babylon afforded and had melded quite fluidly into Babylon's culture and society. But not he! Every new sunrise had been a forceful reminder to him that he was a stranger in a foreign land. The old man fretted that so small a group had agreed to return to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel. Only about 45,000 out of the many, many of his kinsmen who were given the opportunity to return had set out on this long and wearisome journey—a distance of some 900 miles, spanning six months, and all of it on foot.

Every Sabbath day, the old man had grieved anew that he could not go up to Yahweh's House in prayer. During those times of deepest loneliness, sorrow, and despair, he had tried to find consolation by playing on his lyre the songs of Zion which his Mother had taught him when he was a young lad. But after plucking only a few plaintive notes, he could only lament:

How shall I sing Jehovah's song
When Zion's walls in ruin lie,
While in an alien land I die?

And then at the close of each Sabbath, he had carefully packed away his lyre in its goatskin sheath, with the fervent prayer that Yahweh, who had departed from the land of Israel at least so far as his favor was concerned, would remember to be merciful and bring back the pining captives to the joy and peace of Zion. The old man was one of the few exiles who carried in his heart the letter that Jeremiah had sent from Jerusalem to the captives and which assured him that indeed Yahweh would hear him:

For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Jeremiah 29:10 and 11

The old man never doubted, though the ray of hope was ever so slim, that some glad day he would stand within the temple, perhaps even as one of the

temple players accompanying the singers. As a small boy, he had heard the sweet refrains which filled the courts of Solomon's Great Temple on the Sabbath Day. He had listened in rapt attention while watching his father, of the illustrious family of Asaph, standing with all the other temple musicians in their blue and white robes, filling the temple, its courts, and all the surrounding countryside with the brilliancy of voice and instrument. He had been told that he, too, would someday take his place with his father to magnify God's House with these same stirring Psalms of praise. Even then, he had begun his training; for as a scion of the house of Asaph he would also be expected to accompany the temple singers when he came of age.

But he had never played so much as one note in the temple. He, destined to be so nimble of finger on the lyre, had only learned to handle the sword and spear, and now his fingers were clumsy with disuse. How this vexed the old man. Tears squeezed out of his rheumy old eyes and coursed down the furrows of his cheeks at the memory of the lyrical strains which had filled the temple environs—which all the sands of time could not erase—and joy filled his soul at the very thought that such pleasure as he had yearned for all these many years yet awaited him.

He must quicken his step! Even now the children, those paragons of energy, had doubled back and were cavorting around him, urging him to catch up. Zerubbabel was calling a noon break. Already, the old man could hear the melody which the long line of returnees had taken up. Once more hope ran high. The old man rasped out a prayer to Yahweh: "Oh Yahweh, thou who hast kept me safely these many years, shine thou thy glorious face upon my aged one and allow me to return to the land of my people ere I die and be no more. Let me taste that joy once again." It seemed that the prayer revitalized the old man more than all the urgings of the children, and they were surprised how quickly the old man hurried to catch up with the caravan.

• • •

With the foundation of the temple now laid, Zerubbabel had called for a day of celebration and thanksgiving, a day of temple worship. The old man had arisen especially early this morning. Each day since the captives had returned, at the first streaks of sunrise, the old man had hastened to the temple ruins to assist in clearing away the years of debris and rubble. But this day the old man had lain awake even before the first bird had warbled its morning reveille. He wanted time to be alone with God. How thankful he was! He must tell Yahweh this in the most beautiful phrases which he could formulate. Today he would play his lyre with the other temple players; he reached across to the crude table where his lyre rested and caressed the strings lovingly. This was the day for which he had prayed and waited for almost eighty long years, and his soul soared in gratitude to God.

As the old man haltingly made his way to the temple site, he was joined by throngs of fellow worshippers, already caught up in the festive tone of this day. Truly, this was a day of unparalleled joy and celebration!

When the old man reached the newly-laid foundation, the joy of this day was

somewhat marred by the view which met his eye. Deep within this soul, he knew that this temple was not nearly so beautiful—nor would it ever be—as the grand and glorious temple of his youth. Many of the gold and silver goblets and dishes had not been returned. The wall surrounding the temple was crumbling and in disrepair, and even now the enemies were taunting the harried builders and threatening them. Worst of all, the Holy of Holies was empty. There was no Ark of the Covenant covered by the spreading wings of the cherubim. And there was no Shechinah, that divine, visible presence of Yahweh. He meditated on the prophet Haggai's words:

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD. . .and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work. . .

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

The old man believed these words of Haggai, but, oh, how dim was the picture it portrayed. It was as if he looked through a glass, darkly. Yet by faith, he recognized the "Desire of all Nations" who would "fill this house with glory."

As the old man took his prescribed place with all the other temple players and singers, a hush settled over the jubilant exiles as they began to play and sing giving thanks unto the LORD for His goodness and mercy. Lightly and hesitantly the old man coaxed his beloved lyre to play these thrilling Psalms of David and of his own ancestor, Asaph, while the tears streamed down his wrinkled face. Then, the people, no longer able to contain their happiness, in their transports of joy, interrupted the singing with a great shout of exaltation.

But the old man, along with all the other ancients of Judah, began to weep loudly.

The Fruit of the Spirit
DEVELOPING JOY

by Rev. R. Van Overloop

Man was not originally made to mourn, but to rejoice. The Garden of Eden was man's happy abode. As long as he was obedient to God, nothing in the Garden caused man sorrow. But Adam and the human race lost that joy when he fell into sin.

Jesus Christ has come to bring restoration. Man can again have joy, real joy again. The joy Jesus gives is much sweeter and deeper than even that which Adam possessed.

When we will be perfect in heaven, then we shall be perfectly happy. And in proportion as we get ready for heaven, we shall have some of its joy now in this life.

It is our Savior's will that even now His joy shall be within His people and that it should be full. He said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

The apostle John felt much the same way when he said, "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full." It seems that John puts the whole apostolic band into the service of maintaining the Christian's joy.

• • • • •

It is very important that the real joy of the Christian be full and that pastors, elders, deacons, and fellow-saints help to keep it full within each other.

Why is there the need for this service by John and Christ?

There are external circumstances which make joy difficult: affliction, poverty, sickness, losses in business, disappointment of fond hopes, the forsaking of friends, and the cruelty of foes. There are times when the child of God is in "heaviness through manifold temptations". Therefore, there is need that our joy be looked after, lest these trials quench the joy.

Also problems within us can make the maintenance of perpetual joy difficult. Deep depressions (for unknown reasons) and besetting sins cripple holy mirth. Also it is not easy to fight evil and to sing at the same time.

But it is exceedingly necessary that our joy be full! (Jesus and the apostles thought so.) When our joy is full, then we are more than a match for evil. But when it is weak, then we tremble! When our joy in the Lord is full, then we bear up under the burdens so much better. When walking with our Lord, then temptation losses so much of its power. But when this joy is gone, then we grow weak like Samson when he lost his hair. Then even if we do not yield to temptation, it harasses and robs us of much spiritual power.

Yes, the Christian's joy needs looking after. It is no small loss if we are without it. To lose the light of my Father's face, or the full assurance of my interest in Christ is a very great loss. Let us walk prayerfully, so we may possess unbroken peace and joy to the full. Let none of us sit down in misery and be content to be there.

Let us be brightened by thoughts of Christ; shake off lethargy; and have the healthy state of believers!

• • • • •

This joy comes of the Holy Spirit. He gives the oil of joy to the mourning.

He clears the understanding of the darkness of sin and enables us to know the deep things of God. In regeneration and continual conversion He enables us to exercise appropriating faith. (Faith's weakness is our fault, but its strength is all of God.)

He very graciously sanctifies us: discovering sin and exciting holy hatred of it. He graciously quickens His people so they are not slothful in the things of God. He gives joy in assuring us of the forgivenesses of our sins.

Long for no joy but that which the spirit gives.

• • • • •

Jesus and John make it clear that the Scriptures have as one of their great purposes the filling of the believer's joy. The things of the earth cannot satisfy our nobler nature. We thank God for them, but we cannot feast on them.

A great theme of the Scriptures is Jesus Christ and His work for and in us. Therefore, we have many joys.

We have the joy of the atonement; it will be no more ours in heaven than it is now. Our sin is cast into the depths of the sea; the utmost ransom has been paid and will not be withdrawn. There is no condemnation for those in Christ; our sins are removed from us as far as east is from the west. We are robed in righteousness.

We have the joy of living in the love of God, no less now than when we are in heaven.

We have the joy of possessing the divine life within us. Regeneration is the perpetual seal of unending grace.

Another joy is that we possess special privileges: the liberty, the power and the promise of prayer.

We are of all men most blessed. Our hope for the eternal revives us amid fleeting sorrows.

We have God as our Father, Jesus as our Brother, and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter.

• • • • •

The doctrines of Scripture also foster Christian joy.

Election (loved with an everlasting love) made David dance (II Samuel 6:21). Redemption (belonging to Jesus, never to be lost, the power to save to the uttermost) gives great joy. Justification (forgiven forever, clad in Jesus' righteousness, adopted as God's children) gives deep joy. Communion (one with Christ, members of His flesh) provides wonderful peace. Eternal preservation and glory (kept by the power of God, forever secure even in our falls into sin) gives assuring joy.

Scripture also produces in us experiences which promote our joy.

True sorrow at the foot of the cross is joy to the saintly soul. To have faith in Christ and to rest in Him is our joy (Psalm 73:25). The experience of Christian fellowship (with Christ and/or with our fellow-saints) is a great prompt to Christian joy (consider much of I John). It is even true that every drop of bitterness has a sea of sweetness beneath it: often weaning us from worldly-mindedness.

Scripture's every precept and command is meant to help our happiness. Love lies behind every command. Joy comes from knowing that God's commands are freedom's rules. Consider: when are you the happiest? Is it not when you love one another? (You make

your own misery when you look for defects in all things and in everyone.)

Holy activity (diligence in serving God and one another) is the mother of holy joy.

Growth in grace is another fountain of true delight.

* * * * *

Therefore, let us constantly read the Scriptures. Jesus spoke and John wrote exactly that our joy might be full. We mock them by not reading what they wrote and spoke.

Prefer the Scriptures to other books. Read the Bible, and then that which enfeebles you loses its attraction.

No good preacher nor the greatest sermons are meant to keep the saint from reading the Bible. The preaching should but point to the Scriptures and say, "Read this, and this, and this!"

Search the Bible diligently. Compare Scripture with Scripture. And your joy shall spread and deepen.

Do not read the Scriptures superficially. Dive into them, going dee down into the soul of them.

Read the books of the Bible at time, not a bit here or a snippet ther Who can enjoy a novel when it is rea at the rate of a page a day?

And while you read and search an study, pray. Pray the Spirit to bless an give you the joy of the Lord.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; an again I say, REJOICE!

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Paula Faber

MARRIAGES:

-Doug Wassink and Kathy Feenstra were joined in marriage on August 30.

-Dan Schipper and Laura De Young were joined in marriage on October 5.

-David Griess and Rachel Jansma were joined in marriage on August 11.

-Kurt Kaptein and Ruth Zandstra were joined in marriage.

-Randy Van Overloop and Ellen Vander Kooi were joined in marriage on August 24.

-Russ Zwak and Amy Moelker were joined in marriage on November 30.

-Kevin Poortinga and Barbara Smit were joined in marriage.

-Leroy Wiltjer and Brenda Vand Noord were joined in marriage.

-Larry Van Overloop and Lynn Kam were joined in marriage.

-Joel Van Ginkel and Natalie Poppen were joined in marriage.

-Mr. Gerald De Vries and Mrs. Hele Meulenberg were joined in marriage.

-Dirk and Carol Monsma were joined marriage on October 6.