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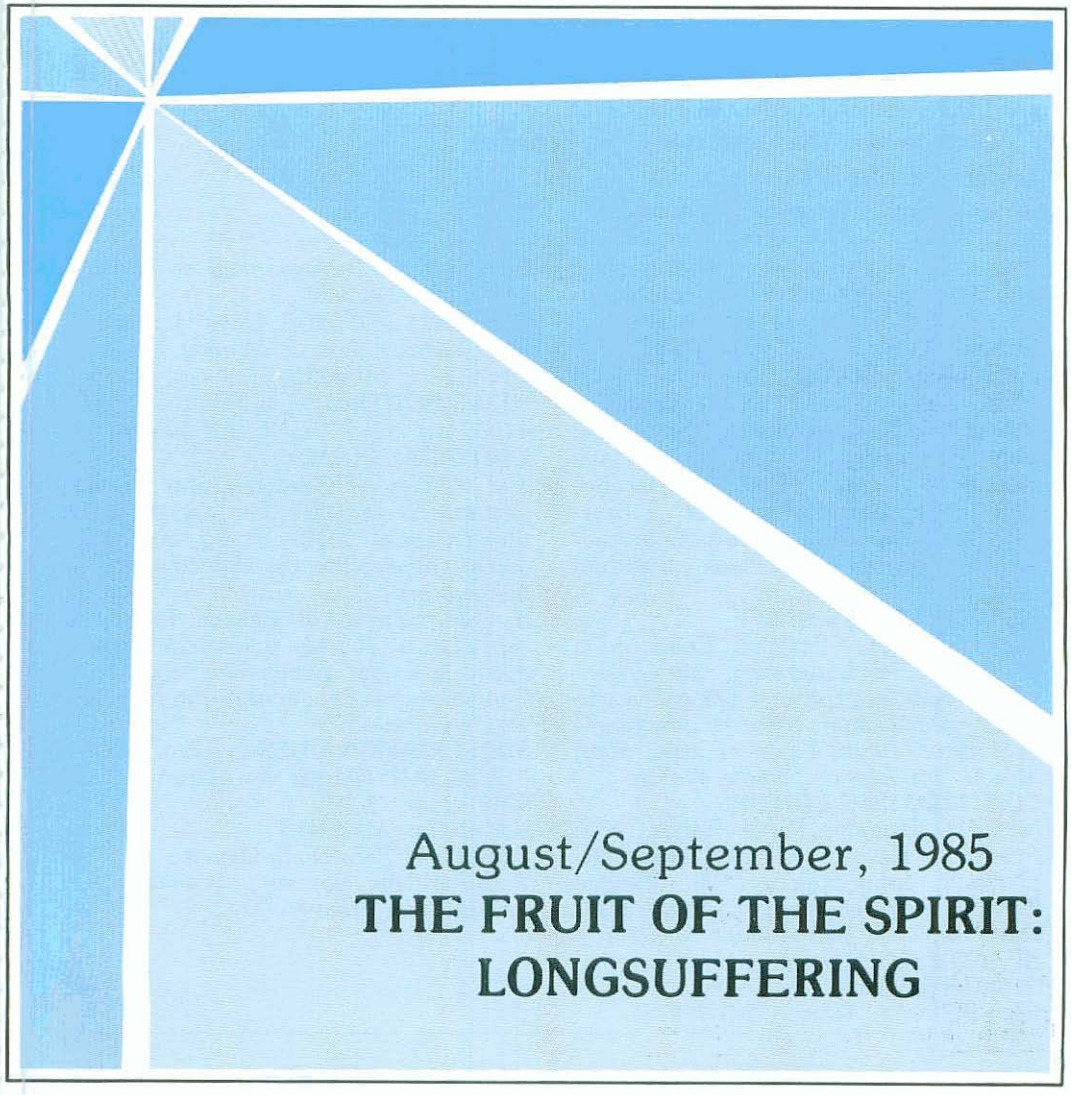

August/September, 1985

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LONGSUFFERING

BEACON LIGHTS

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The Fruit of the Spirit

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM. . . ."

by Don Doezema

"If that idiot-driver at the head of the line had not been sleeping when the light turned, I could have made it through!"

Have you ever heard anyone say that. . .or said it yourself? For that matter, how often do you go through an entire day without hearing a single snide remark about somebody else's ineptitude, or stupidity? Impatience with others is an all too common occurrence among us - especially, perhaps, right in our own families, where close familiarity seems to make irritating habits all the harder to endure. "Don't tell me you used up all the hot bath-water **again**!" or "When are you **ever** going to learn how long to boil an egg?" Consistently gracious toleration of the supposed faults and failures of other people is a rare virtue among men.

And that kind of tolerance is only the bare beginning of this matter of "long-suffering." How long are we willing to suffer, without resentment, when we are really **abused** by others? I'm not talking now about minor irritations but of actual **provocations**. "So and so has maligned my name. I'll fix **him**! I'll let everyone know how incompetent the guy is to be a judge of **anything**." Or, there's the fellow who is unkind right to our face. How often do we not reply in kind, or, what's very little better, hold our **tongues** but burn with anger in our **hearts**. Thin-skinned it's called. We're quick to lose our cool under the slightest provocation. We are content with nothing less than immediate satisfaction of our own aroused emotions. So we lash out in such a way that, though it might make **us** feel better for the moment, we succeed only in making matters worse.

• • • • •

Did **Jesus** ever have occasion to "suffer long"? To ask the question is to answer it. Sinners contradicted Him. His own rejected Him. His friends were fickle. Finally He was subjected to an ignominious trial, after which He was tortured on a cross. . .and at any moment He could have prayed the Father for twelve legions of angels, more than enough by far to wreck vengeance on all His foes. But He didn't. "Father, forgive them. . . ."

• • • • •

It was but a couple of weeks till the last Passover. Jesus' ministry in Perea was finished. He set His face to Jerusalem. And He did that, knowing full well what lay ahead. The dark shadow of Gethsemane, the black night of the cross, was surely creeping over His soul.

Jesus' disciples understood that a visit to Judea, and more particularly to Jerusalem, constituted a threat to His life. They were therefore apparently baffled by His insistence on going there anyway, and they followed Him only with great apprehension (Mark 10:32).

They were afraid for Jesus, of course; but they feared also for their own safety, since whatever evil befell the Master would almost certainly involve His disciples as well.

Jesus had, some five months prior to this, explained to them exactly what was in store for Him in Jerusalem. And He had done so in clear, unequivocal language. "The Son of man," He said, "is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day" (Mark 9:31). How did they respond to that? We read simply that they didn't understand and they were afraid to ask Him concerning it (vs. 32). And Jesus was apparently content at that time to let them remain in their ignorance.

On their way to Jerusalem for the last Passover, Jesus once again took His disciples apart in order that He might tell them, in words more precise than any He had ever before used with them, what was going to happen to Him in Jerusalem. Listen: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Matt. 10:17-19).

What more could Jesus have said, to make His instruction clearer and easier to understand? How could it ever be that the disciples were caught unprepared by the crucifixion, and then abandoned hope after His death, as if that were the end?

To us, who stand in the church of Christ nearly 2,000 years after Pentecost, and who have therefore the benefit of the church's long study of the truths of Christ's kingdom in the light of the New Testament Scriptures and with the enlightenment of the Spirit of Christ, that instruction of Jesus seems so very elementary. It seems incredible that the disciples could have failed to understand, Yet, they did. Why? In an attempt to make some sense out of their inability to comprehend, we can say first of all that, to the disciples' way of thinking, a suffering, dying **Messiah** was a contradiction in terms. How, after all, they must have reasoned, could the **Son of God** be **killed**? And if, as they thought, He could not **die**, then how could He **rise** again? We read in Mark 9:10 that they kept the idea of a resurrection to themselves, "questioning one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." Yes, what it **meant**. Not ready to take Jesus' words in the **literal** sense, they were apparently searching for some hidden, figurative **meaning**.

There is yet another factor which must be borne in mind in considering this blindness of the disciples. Of Jesus' instruction that "the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men" we read that the disciples "understood not this saying, **and it was hid from them**, that they perceived it not" (Luke 9:44 & 45). The idea here is that there was a **divine purpose** in it all. In the end, His disciples too must forsake Him and flee. Jesus must suffer and die alone. In the final analysis it is therefore **of the Lord** that the disciples did not at this time have a clear conception of the nature of Jesus' work.

What we have here, then, is a group of men, not yet enjoying the light which Pentecost would shed on the cross, struggling with a difficult concept, namely, a **Messiah** Who **dies**. What's more, their apparent inability

to get in the clear regarding it was according to the good counsel of God. And Jesus understood all of this very well. It would seem therefore that it would require little in the way of endurance, of long-suffering, of patience, on the part of Christ to remain sympathetic with His disciples in their continued ignorance of what lay ahead. But that's hardly the case. Think, first of all, about this matter of God's counsel. Do we imagine for a moment that **we** have **better** reason to lose patience with those who oppose or in some way annoy us, because we have to do only with **them** and not with **God**? Do we think, in other words, that those who contradict **us** function somehow independently of the counsel of God? King David was right on target when, in response to Abishai's offering to take off Shimei's head, he said, "the **Lord** hath said unto him, Curse David" (II Sam. 16:9 & 10). When our anger flares in quick resentment for an offense against us, we are in a real sense chafing under the hand of **God**, Who chooses often to refine His people as silver is tried - by **fire**. The point is, at any rate, that we cannot lightly dismiss the repeated attempts of the disciples to **deter** Jesus from His appointed way, simply by saying that Christ would surely have been ready to forgive their opposition because their ignorance was, after all, "of the Lord." For if that applies to **Him** (and it does), it applies with equal force to **us** in all of our comparatively speaking petty grievances against others.

Secondly, what about the fact that the problem which the disciples faced was a **perplexing** one? We've said that the disciples did not have the light that Pentecost shed on the work of Israel's Redeemer. That's true, of course, but we must not think for a minute that their ignorance can be **excused** on that basis. The **difficulty** they would have in ridding their minds of the false notions which were so much a part of the thinking of the day is one thing; but their **refusal to believe** Jesus' plain teaching of what His way must be is quite another. The fact is that their conception of the kingdom of the Messiah was a **carnal** one. They were looking for earthly grandeur, and they **kept out** anything that was contradictory. They believed, in other words, what they **wanted** to believe. The blindness, therefore, which Jehovah God used for His own good purposes, was a willful one. So well had the disciples convinced themselves that their understanding of the kingdom was correct, that they **would not** accept a literal interpretation of His plain words.

And what we must remember is that this attitude was something in which the disciples persisted from the time they began following Jesus till the time when they wielded a sword in the Garden to try to prevent His capture by the enemy. What I'm saying is that Jesus for three full years had to **live with** what was really an **interference** with His work, on the part of those who were His closest companions and most loyal supporters. What do you think, did that require **long-suffering** on the part of Jesus? You'd better believe it! It would not have been so trying a circumstance if what we've just been examining was nothing more than a simple misunderstanding of certain parts of Jesus' instruction. It was, instead, as we've said, a **refusal to believe**; and, further, it involved not merely an isolated point of doctrine but the very essence of Jesus' ministry.

The absurdity which the disciples imagined there to be in a literal interpretation of Jesus' instruction concerning His death, and their reluctance to press the matter further with the Master were but symptoms of what must be seen to have been a marked contrast between the **mind of Christ** and the **mind of the disciples**. Not, of course, that there was no point of contact between the disciples and Jesus. There was. Jesus could talk to them as to those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. And it wasn't either that the disciples did not have a genuine love for the Lord. When they said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16) they meant what they said. And when they confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), they meant what they said. But immediately after that beautiful confession of Peter it became apparent that there was nevertheless a stark contrast between the thinking of Christ and that of His disciples: "Be it far from thee, Lord:this (i.e., His suffering and death at the hands of the Jews) shall not be unto thee" (Matt. 16:22). And the exact **nature** of that contrast became the more apparent when, at a time when Christ had set His face to go to Jerusalem, the disciples fell again to vying for positions of greatness in the kingdom (see Mark 10:32-45). Jesus' only thought was to do the will of His Father, even when that meant for Him the way of the cross - for others; theirs was for an earthly kingdom, with earthly glory and power - for themselves. Jesus' response to the request of James and John for positions at His right and left hand is therefore noteworthy for its **gentleness**. Their unworthy ambition surely grieved His heart. I wonder. . .were we there, would we have thought that the only proper response to such unrelenting earthly-mindedness would be **righteous indignation**? How "long" do we suffer with the persistently erring brother? **Jesus**' answer was simply, "Ye know not what ye ask." And He went on patiently to give the disciples much-needed instruction concerning **true** greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

I ask again, do we think that it would not have been so very difficult for Jesus to endure the disciples' mistaken notions about the nature of His kingdom and work? If we do, I think we do not fully appreciate the struggle which would have to be the daily lot of the sinless One as He lived His life among men, men whose **best works** are spoiled by pride and self-seeking. But, whatever the case, things **did get worse**. The suffering which He endured "from the beginning of His incarnation," as our Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper puts it, was immeasurably intensified at the end of His life. The details of that suffering, during what is called Passion Week, are familiar to all of us. We will not therefore dwell on them here. Note only, concerning them, that He was completely innocent of every accusation brought against Him. Yet, as Peter declares in his first epistle (2:23), "When he was reviled he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not." How unlike us! It's not for nothing that the apostle Paul includes longsuffering in the nine characteristics which he calls the fruit of the Spirit in his letter to the Galatians; mentions it in his first letter to the Corinthians, in his list of qualities that characterize love; makes it, in his letter to the Ephesians, an

important part of the walk which is worthy of the vocation to which we are called; encourages the Colossians to exercise it in a walk which is worthy of the Lord; and commends it to Timothy. Longsuffering, patience, needs **emphasis**. When we are wronged, or **think** we have been wronged, our response is often calculated to ensure that whoever offended us will regret it. Not so, Christ. He "committed himself," says Peter, "to him that judgeth righteously." Rather than troubling Himself over whether or not His tormentors will escape justice, He committed His way to God, the righteous Judge. And He concerned Himself rather with the long-term spiritual welfare of those with whom He had to do. "Ye know not what ye ask," He told the disciples. . . and then proceeded to give them instruction concerning what it was for which they **should** ask. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". . .and then He **died**, for elect sinners whose daily offenses constitute a rejection as real as that of those who cried, "Crucify him!"

In the context of the verses quoted above, Peter declares that "Christ also suffered for us, **leaving us an example**, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). "All through His agony in the garden, His trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and His passion on the tree," writes Spurgeon, "He waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; He waited and waited on; was patient to perfecton, far excelling all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. . . . Did the Only Begotten wait, and shall we be petulant and rebellious?. . . Let us (rather) arm ourselves with the same mind. . . ."

The Fruit of the Spirit

LONGSUFFERING

by Mary Beth Lubbers

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God. . . .
Hebrews 11:25

As a child, there were two stories from the Old Testament which distressed me a great deal. Neither of these stories seemed to have a very just or happy ending. And if there is one thing which every child looks for in a story, it is the just and happy ending. Good triumphs over evil; the hero is vindicated. A child will endure injustice throughout the entire story if only he can be sure that justice will prevail. However, both of the stories to which I am referring struck me as stories in which the retribution seemed far greater than the offense. And as I grew older, both of these stories instilled in me a chilling sense of the terrible holiness of God. Ours is not a God who winks at sin. Not any sin! No matter that you claim a record of lifetime obedience. Ours is a God who speaks

His Word but once and who demands unswerving obedience.

The first story of which I am speaking is the story of Uzzah. You probably remember the account of Uzzah. He was the Israelite who, when the Ark of the Covenant was being returned to Jerusalem at David's royal dictum, reached out his hand to steady it on the oxcart—and met with swift and sudden death at the hand of Jehovah right there beside the Ark. Even King David was afraid of the Lord that day.

This story really perturbed me! Here was a man who did not want to see God's holy Ark topple off the cart into the dirt. Seemingly his intentions were good—at least Scripture gives no indication that his rash act was one of defiance or a deliberate flaunting of God's commands. Rather his deed appeared to be an instinctive righting of something gone wrong. Sort of like a mother who will steady a hot pan with her bare hands—and sport a burned hand for months afterward. Reflexive. Instinctive. But had God not said that the Ark was never to be touched? Uzzah knew this, too.

The other story which always left me with a dreadful feeling deals directly with the man whom I have chosen to personify this particular fruit of the Holy Spirit. He is Moses. Here we have a man who spent his whole life in faithful service to God and the unthankful people whom he had been called to lead, only to be denied entrance to the physical land of Canaan at the end of his monumental life's work. One little act. He struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God had instructed. Remembering, too, that on an earlier occasion, Moses had been instructed to hit the rock as the means to cause water to gush forth. But not in this instance. Once again retribution was swift and stiff. How this story bothered me! And even to this day after I spend weeks teaching young children about Moses—his patience, his longsuffering, his endurance of the wretched people whom he was called to lead—I always feel rather crestfallen to tell this story. One offense and he must hear, "Ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" Numbers 20:12. Oh, I hasten to tell the children that Moses went to a far better Canaan when he died. Nevertheless, there is always the niggling feeling that God dealt unfairly with Moses. And then I am struck anew with the awesome truth that if Moses, he who talked to God face to face as a friend (Ex. 33:11), cannot presume upon God's favor by a lifetime of singular faithfulness and service to Him, how much less can I!

• • •

To suffer long. To bear with another's weaknesses and failings and sins for a long time. Truly, if this virtue is ever to reside within us it can only be a fruit of the Spirit. If we cannot even endure the imperfections of someone whom we love dearly and who loves us in return—how can we ever suffer long towards those who mean to do us harm, towards those who intentionally and maliciously vex us to the quick? And yet, Scripture is replete with exhortations to suffer long. How many times must I forgive my brother? Christ tells us we must **ever** and **always** forgive the same brother for the **same** offense. Who of himself can endure offense this long? Who of himself is able to be this longsuffering? Certainly, it will have to be a fruit of the Spirit.

Matthew 5 further instructs us that

whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; if a man sue thee and take thy coat, then give him your cloak, too; and if someone compels you to go a mile, go with him two. Give, give, give. Be patient, be patient, be patient. Endure. Suffer long.

Such a man was Moses, youngest son of Amram and Jochebed. Moses did not begin his life by being a longsuffering man. No man ever has. It would be safer to say that Moses was the hastiest, the rashest, the least longsuffering of men. Like all the other divinely-instilled Christian virtues with which we are dealing in this series of articles, longsuffering takes a lifetime of grooming. Moses would be almost 80 years old before we can see evidence of his longsuffering. The experience of this gift in the Christian life takes years of refining, honing, polishing. . .and prayer. Like Moses, we are going to have to spend "forty years in the wilderness of Midian" to tame that quick tongue, to subdue that hot temper, to quell that vindictive spirit. Like Moses, we are going to have to spend hours with our faces in the dirt in holy communion with God in order to cultivate the gift of longsuffering. Only then, like Moses, will we have eyes to see and hearts to suffer long for the "recompence of the reward" Hebrews 11:26b.

Moses lived one hundred and twenty years, his life being divided into three parts of forty years each. The first two parts (80 years) were occupied with the training of intellect and development of character so important to prepare him for the great work which would comprise his last forty years. Each of these periods was necessary so that Moses could attain unto the maturity which would enable him to become God's mouthpiece—zealous, yet tempered; assertive to do God's will, all the while patiently enduring the affliction of God's people.

The first forty years finds Moses being instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22). Much of it was undoubtedly the sheerest folly, but much of it was essential for the position of leadership he must assume and the nation which he would found. The philosophers, the mathematicians, the astronomers, the scholars, and the wise men of Egypt would do all in their power to make Moses their own—because oh, how heady is learning and knowledge—but the instruction which he had received during those first four or five years on his mother Jochebed's lap would be strong enough for him to refute Egypt's lures and lusts, so that Hebrews 11:24 can say, "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. . . ."

After Moses' impetuous act of killing the Egyptian taskmaster who was maltreating a fellow Hebrew, he decisively renounced Egypt with its enticement of earthly success and its intoxicating prospects of fame and fortune, and set out on the long forty-year path of self-denial, reproach, and longsuffering. And so, he is guided to Midian where he has more to learn, his forty-year education in Egypt yet incomplete.

By his act of leaving Egypt, Moses separates himself from the world of sin; in Midian, he must learn the painful separation from his sinful self. Now, in exile, in the solitude of the desert sand and in the companionship of mountain slopes, he must be educated in divine virtues. He must be completely drained

of self-will, self-reliance, self-energy, and self-interest in order to become a willing vessel, a fit instrument for God. A man trained to head up the Egyptian empire must now keep sheep for a living! It must have seemed to Moses as if his life were a failure.

Only after this second period of forty years is the man of God ready, God making His appearance to Moses in the burning bush calling him to the work of his life on that eventful day on Horeb. No, Moses does not hink that he is ready or capable of this work and gives God several good reasons why he should not go to Pharaoh; nevertheless, he has been disciplined to be a man of unfailing patience, meek, fit to free his groaning kinsmen.

By Moses' hand the plagues fell fast and furiously upon Egypt and its inhabitants. He whose nature by this time was gentle and tender and meek, he who would rather pray for the cessation of a plague than for its advent, invoked plague upon plague over Egypt. And although God had given his brother Aaron to Moses for an eloquent spokesman, by the seventh plague Aaron is completely dropped out of sight and Moses exclusively is given the instruction from heaven which crippled Egypt, bringing this proud land to the very precipice of total destruction. The man who had fled Egypt in fear and furtiveness now bestrides its portals as a king.

All Israel had witnessed the power of the plagues and the mighty arm of Jehovah through His servant Moses, yet the people had already turned on Moses, that is on God, at the Red Sea, so that Psalm 106:7 says, "Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even the Red Sea."

Then Moses stretched forth his arm, and God sent a strong east wind which divided the waters, and the people of Israel walked through the midst of the Red Sea with unmoistened foot and on dry sandals. But Pharaoh and the mighty Egyptian army were swept beneath its stormy waters forever.

With the song of deliverance still on their lips,

I will sing unto the Lord,
for He hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and the rider
hath He thrown into the sea.
Who is like unto Thee, O Lord,
fearful in praises, doing wonders?
Thou in Thy mercy
hast led forth Thy people.

the children of Israel were only three days into the wilderness, and finding no water they murmured. And when they tasted the waters of Marah they were bitterly disappointed and mutinied,hurling all their complaints at Moses. But Moses cried unto the Lord. He did not rebuke the people nor threaten to lay down his holy office—although by this time he must have begun to detect that he was up against a seething mass of rebels, and that the whole burden and responsibility for this pilgrimage lay on his shoulders, he who had never wanted to stand before Pharaoh or lead this people in the first place.

Short of sight, short of memory, short of faith, yet knowing full well the abundant resources of Jehovah's storehouse and the matchless strength of His right arm, it is only a few weeks later and the people murmur against Moses, demanding food. Moses, their longsuffering leader, points out to them

that they are not murmuring against him, but against God (Exodus 16:7 &8).

And so, God fed them with the Wonder Bread—Manna. For a time the people were content and Moses was their successful and admired leader. But then they came to Rephidim, and in their displeasure at the lack of water they threaten to stone Moses. And again, with water nowhere in sight, Moses cried unto the Lord, "What shall I do. . . .?" And Jehovah, here as longsuffering and patient as His servant Moses, does not chide or reproach the people, but gives Moses orders to strike the rock and water shall come out of it. "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" I Corinthians 10:4.

Oh, there was no end to it. Moses, in addition to the grave responsibilities of leading some two million people, had to endure their constant murmurings and perpetual grievances. Envy, insolence, ingratitude, and even open revolt always lay close to the surface. Manna was not sufficient for these wayfarers, but they must have meat. And God gave them their meat, but how quickly did their delightful feast turn into dreadful funeral.

But the repeated outbreak of these murmurers all along the route through the wilderness only brings to prominence the sympathetic ear, the patience, the longsuffering of this great man of God. When the people complained to him, he went straight to God. When it seemed likely that the whole nation must perish for their sin, he besought God and turned the imminent destruction away. Twice for 40 days in their interest he stayed on Mount Sinai. When God desired to kill them all and make a new nation from the loins of Moses, he pleaded with God to remember His covenant mercies and that He not give the Egyptians reason to mock the promises of God.

How longsuffering he was towards this stiffnecked and recalcitrant people! On one occasion, weighed down and almost broken by the burden of his office, he prayed to God and said:

> *Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?*
>
> *Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?* *Numbers 11:11 & 12*

Nevertheless, Moses endured under great provocation. The longsuffering of Moses reached its noblest note in Exodus 32:32 where God, seeing the blatant idolatry of the people while He is yet inscribing His hatred of it on stone, gives Moses the opportunity to break with them once and for all. And although Moses' anger waxed hot against their sin, yet he had the deepest Christ-like compassion for the people willing to atone for their sin. What a price he was willing to pay for the ungrateful, idolatrous people! "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—: and if not, blot me, I pay thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." How the heart of God must have yearned towards this longsuffering servant, whose proposal so vividly anticipated that other future scene.

The personal blow which Moses endured at the mouth of his own brother and sister when they challeng-

ed his leadership, the bitter disappointment he felt when the children of Israel decided to make a new captain and enter Canaan without him (Had the people so soon forgotten his intercession for them on the mountain, his tender devotion for them?), the conspiracy led by Korah ("We are all holy. . .")—he left it all in the hands of God. He himself was willing to be trampled on, to bear aspersion, to endure reproach. He himself was eager to stay the leprosy, to atone for the people, to stop the plague with a censer. Generously, selflessly, chivalrously he suffered long for the people and the glory of God's Great Name.

And so, we come to the end of the recorded deeds of Moses. He is now very old. But his step is firm and sure; he is still energetic and strong; his eyes are yet glinty and keen; his understanding is incisive and penetrating. He has but one consuming goal in life, and that is to enter Canaan, to enjoy, after all these long and toilsome years, its promised milk and honey, and to bask in its rest. There he stands on the very threshold of realizing his life's ambition. And then it happened. In anger he struck the rock, at long last giving full vent to his fury, even calling God's chosen people REBELS. After a lifetime of exemplary patience, long-suffering, and intercessory work, he reverted to his old ways of impatience, anger, and an unruly spirit. God would have none of it. Not even from His own chosen friend. Moses had not sanctified God in the eyes of the people. The penalty? He would not enter Canaan.

And so, we find Moses, God's faithful servant and friend, pleading with God to let him set foot on Canaan's rich and lovely ground, until finally God becomes wroth with him and says, "Speak no more unto me of this matter" Deuteronomy 3:26.

So, what do we have here for our example and edification? How fitting is Scripture in all its pictures and applications! Moses represented the law, and the law being weak (Romans 8:3), is not able to bring us into glory. It will take the true Joshua, Jesus the Saviour, to lead us over the Jordan. However, we have in Moses the Old Testament prototype of Christ, albeit, an imperfect one. There is only One who perfectly bears long with us, who never strikes out in sudden anger, who intercedes for His people day and night, ceaselessly! What a faultless Mediator! What a perfect Saviour! I can live and die happily knowing that Jesus suffers long, that is, forever, for me. Oh to be like Him!

"Whoever intends to enter married life should do so in faith and in God's name. He should pray to God that it may prosper as according to His will and that Marriage may not be treated as a matter of fun and folley. It is a hazardous matter and as serious as anything on earth can be. Therefore we should not rush into it as the world does, in keeping with its frivilousness and wantonness and in pursuit of its pleasure; but before taking this step we should consult God so that we may lead our marriage life to His glory. Those who do not go about it in this way may certainly thank God if it turns out well. If it turns out badly, they should not be surprised; for they did not begin it in the name of God and did not ask for His blessing."

-Martin Luther

The Fruit of the Spirit
DEVELOPING LONG-SUFFERING

by Rev. Ron Van Overloop

For the Christian to grow and develop in this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit it is necessary that we know what it is and how we obtain it.

To be longsuffering is to be patient in bearing the offences and injuries of others. It is to be mild and slow in avenging, i.e. slow to anger and slow to punish. It is an endurance and perseverance, especially shown in bearing with troubles and ills. It is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. It is the ability to forgive seventy times seven times.

It is the opposite of wrath and revenge. Its opposite is to be short of sight, short of memory, and short of faith, so that one reacts, lashing out vindictively. It is taming the wild tongue and cooling the hot temper.

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Longsuffering is an attribute of God.

God is longsuffering (Ex. 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; II Peter 3:9, 15). It is God's unchangeable goodness to His people whereby He brings them to full glory in Christ, but he does so in the way of their suffering. It is God's mercy which determines that our suffering and affliction is a necessary means unto the fulness of our final perfection in glory. This longsuffering of God can be distinguished into various elements.

1. Foremost in God's mind is our final perfection in the heavenly kingdom. It is the final glory in all its riches of perfection, the inheritance which God has prepared for them that love Him (I Peter 1:4).

2. The unchangeable mercy of God to lead His people along the way which brings them to that highest perfection of glory.

3. The determination that the best way to this highest of all ends is a measure of suffering. Before we can enter into that glorious inheritance, yea, in order to enter that inheritance, it is necessary that we fill this measure (II Cor. 4:17; Heb. 12:11).

So strong and sure is this attribute of God towards the elect, that Peter can write that "the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (II Peter 3:15).

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Longsuffering is also an attribute of Christians.

As such it is a gift of God (Rom. 15:5; Gal. 5:22). The only way we, the people of God, can possess this attribute is if God graciously gives it to us. It must be the fruit of the Spirit. He mercifully communicates, through the Holy Spirit, this attribute.

Longsuffering is exercised by the believer in two very similar ways.

1. We are to be longsuffering over against the afflictions and griefs which are a part of our pilgrim way.

2. We are to be longsuffering overagainst the follies, weaknesses and injuries of men, whether they be our enemies or our fellowsaints.

Longsuffering then keeps us from growing remiss and falling into sin through despair. It keeps us firm when facing daily evils in this valley of tears.

It is the command of God that we be longsuffering.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of

God, holy and beloved, . . .longsuffering" (Col. 3:12).

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord." "Be ye also patient." "Take, my brethren, the prophets. . .for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience" (James 5:7, 8, 10). (The word translated "patience" in these verses in James is elsewhere translated "longsuffering".)

Therefore, it is appropriate for us to talk about developing this attribute of longsuffering.

However, the development of this attribute is not accomplished through the mere determination of man's will, not even the sanctified determination of the will of the converted child of God. It is a gift, a gift of God. It is a fruit of the Spirit.

The key, then, as to how it is possible for the child of God to develop this gift is found in Colossians 1:9-11. There Paul is praying that God would give to the saints at Colosse this gift. If it is a gift, then to possess it, we must go to the Giver and ask Him to give it to us and to do so for Jesus' sake. Like Moses, who possessed this gift so richly (Numbers 12:3), we must go straight to God, presenting to Him (as He wants us to do; yea, commands us to do) our problems and needs.

This means that we must pray to the Giver of this gift, this wonderful fruit of the Spirit. We must pray for:

1. The ability to see the end which God has in mind for us: the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith. This is the ability to see the "city which hath foundations" and to "have respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Hebrews 11:10 and 26).

2. The ability to see God's providential hand behind the actions of those who offend or persecute us, and behind all the circumstances which bring us suffering;

3. The ability to see this God as our gracious, loving, heavenly Father, Who is always purposing our good. (This is the ability to see God's longsuffering over us.)

4. The ability to subject our desires and self-interest to the will of God; to be humble under the mighty hand of God (I Peter 5:6);

5. The ability to accept, not just receive, our Father's will to give us afflictions, troubles, and persecutions in our pilgrim way;

6. The ability to leave the judging of others and of situations to God as the One Who judges righteously (I Peter 2:23);

7. The ability to look at the offender in a forgiving manner.

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Is there anyone in your life whom you find it hard to forgive or to suffer long?

Then consider that "if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (Matt. 6:15). Then pray for the grace to forgive and to suffer long.

"Grudge not one another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9).

We are to find our examples for being longsuffering in the prophets (James 5:10). But the best example is our Lord Himself. He is the only One Who perfectly bears long with us, never striking out in sudden anger, but ceaselessly interceding for us day and night. He is a perfect Saviour, for He suffers long!

Truth Vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS

4. Saints Exhorted In It

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). This is why Jude writes to the church in the apostasy of the last days, urging Christians to earnestly contend for the faith. Heretics had crept into the churches, so Jude goes into action at once, alerting the congregations by means of this letter. The action he advocates is not so much in opposition to heresies and heretics as it is "for the faith." True, there are enemies within (more dangerous than those without), and they must be dealt with strenuously, but opposing them must be for the sake of the faith.

BELOVED. The word appears 62 times in the New Testament, thrice being translated **wellbeloved**, 9 times **dearly beloved** and thrice **dear**. It is no mere term of sentimental endearment. Such is not to be found in the Bible. It is an inspired word of God, as much as any other part of infallible, God-breathed Scripture. Then it is much more than the writer's polite, even intimate and loving form of address. It is what the Spirit saith to the churches, to God's people, His beloved ones, loved with an everlasting love. The "beloved of God" are "called saints," that is, saints by calling. Rom. 1:7. "Beloved" is a name of God's elect, for they are "as touching election **beloved**." Rom. 11:28. The name, then, belongs to the church corporately, Eph. 5:25, and to its membership individually. Rom. 16:5, 8, 9, 12. Therefore, when the minister thus properly addresses the church in the stated worship service, God is saying to her, "I have loved thee; thou art Mine." Isa. 43:4, 1.

THE COMMON SALVATION. This is the subject matter of the faith once delivered to the saints. It is the faithful saying worthy of all their acceptation and enjoyed in common with them all. Its commonality is not in this, that it is a sincere offer and invitation to all humanity reached with the notice of it, but in this, that its common proclamation is of a particular gospel. Eternal salvation is not common to all men, head for head, for all are not within the fold and enclosure of salvation. But the meaning is that it is common to all God's elect, to all true believers in Christ, to all the saints. The electing love of God is common to them all alike. What else they have in common is the same covenant of grace, the same promised and realized blessings in Christ, the same precious price of His own blood making them His own property, the same righteousness, regeneration, calling, justification, sanctification, the same common inheritance of glory, and the same one and only way of salvation through "the

common faith" (Tit. 1:4) in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Its commonality embraces not all men absolutely, but all His people, the church and its members of all sorts and conditions of men redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, tribe, people and nation.

THE EXHORTATION: "that ye should earnestly contend." This is one word in the original, meaning literally "to increase and intensify the agonizing," as in gymnastic competition, "to contend for masteries, for athletic victories" in the crowded stadium (I Cor. 9:24, 25), "to struggle with vehement zeal," as in pugilistic combat (9:26, 27. So the term is strong enough to carry the idea of **fight** (Jn. 18:36). We fight "for the faith." What is that? The faith of the Bible, say the heretics and cultists. What does the Bible teach? we ask. Answering that produces a creed. We fight for our creeds, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, the Creed of Chalcedon. We will fight for much more: for the personally applied truth as expressed in the Heidelberg Catechism, for the six loci of Reformed doctrine as expressed in the articles of the Belgic Confession, for what we call six-petalled T-U-L-I-P-S, taking the S for the Sovereignty of God, then Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace and Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints, as expressed in the Canons of Dordt. The errors we contend against are the so called "free offer of the gospel" and the free-willism of human nature's exalted purity and power. We struggle against deniers of double predestination: divine election and sovereign reprobation. We agonize to keep all this precious body of truth. We are "valiant for truth," not chiefly negatively, but positively in preaching it boldly, openly, fully and faithfully, disputing the very opposite to the truth, the lie, and defending the faith in our writings and publications and in our tape recording and radio ministries. It is a battle fought in much agony of soul to preserve our Christian schools and to keep our churches thriving under the preaching of the pure Word of God.

HOW. We all earnestly contend for the faith when we: (1) support faithful pastors by our attendance upon the means of grace, (2) honor our office bearers, (3) encourage our missionaries, (4) distribute our pamphlets, books and periodicals and (5) train others to be faithful witnesses and ambassadors for Christ in our schools and seminary. Our Sunday School teachers are also earnestly contending for the faith when their educative ministry is in the spirit of, "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27).

Our most holy faith was once-for-all delivered to the saints. This occurred when the divine revelation in holy Scripture was finally completed in the last inspired book of the Bible having been written, that of The Revelation. With that book delivered to the church the canon of Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith and life, was closed. Nothing further was to be added. It is not the Book of the Scripture plus some other book, say the Koran, or whatever. Divine revelation is not a mixture of fact and fantasy, the sublime and the ridiculous. To offer other extra-biblical books that contain other than this faith of the Scriptures as keys to the truth is to offer the poison of the lie. To add in this way a book by

a male or a female heretic, or to subtract from "the faith" by a Digest Bible or a Shorter New Testament is to intrude what God in Christ did not give or to corrupt and remove what He gave. So, to the end of the world, it is the canonical Scripture given once-for-all which is the only rule of faith and conduct. We cannot have an "only rule" then **plus** something. God speaks to us exclusively through that only rule of faith and practice, Holy Scripture, and no more through dreams, visions, voices, Christophanies, strange language utterances or fantastical miracles. We cannot have an "only rule" and a subtraction from it. A yardstick is thirty-six inches; it is not forty inches long, nor is it thirty-four inches in length. Our only infallible rule is Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels and the Epistles. Let all men hear them, for if men believe not the Scripture canon, if they believe not the once-for-all delivered Faith, neither will they believe despite all the rest!

TO THE SAINTS. What does this mean? It means that the Faith was once for all delivered to the Church of saints. For example, "the saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13) means the church there. The saints in Rome refers to the church in Rome (Rom. 1:7; 16:15). "The church of God at Corinth" consisted of sanctified "called saints" (I Cor. 1:2). "The church at Corinth" with "all the saints which are in all Achaia" (II Cor. 1:1) shows that the saints were not just loose, scattered groups of believers, but were organized and instituted in local churches. So when the Scripture speaks of the saints at Ephesus, at Philippi and at Colossae, it means the churches in these places. The church of the saints is the depository of the Christian Faith. Unto it the oracles of God were committed. (See Acts 7:38; 20:17, 27, 28; Rom. 3:2; II Cor. 5:19; II Pet. 1:1; 3:1; 1:21).

The word "saints" means "holy ones," but that does not mean we may find a perfect church on earth. Jesus had said to the apostles, "Ye are clean, but not all." Judas was also in the apostolate. The church in Samaria, under the stirring ministry of Philip, had, in its membership a baptized, base and hypocritical pretender to magic. No church is perfect. The emperor, Frederick III, who had requested the preparation and production of the Heidelberg Catechism, answered one of his courtiers who hoped to find a church free of hypocrites in the words, "You will have to go beyond the frozen sea where there are no men. Yet if you should reach the place, there might be one hypocrite there then!"

JUDE WARNS. "I gave all diligence to write unto you. . .it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you." Apply this to ourselves and our churches today. Why is this so needful? Our churches are extending their bounds. They are prosperous, especially spiritually. We have been awakened out of sleep, are favored with morning light and much happy activity. But there are dangers in all this. The spurious is so likely to slip in unnoticed. Jude warns us that in the church in her best condition men, and women, will arise who are clouds without rain, trees without fruit, giving themselves over to fornication. "Take heed that ye be not deceived" (Lk. 21:8). Take heed to the Faith once delivered to the saints. Be sound in it, true to it, earnestly contend for it, with the aim to be approved in the sight of God. Then our work shall be real and permanent.

Gary Vander Schaaf is a enthusiastic teacher of junior high students at Adams Street Christian School. Because he is a close colleague of mine, I asked him to let us print the article he wrote in the Adam's Announcer regarding his son, who has cerebral palsy. -D.H.

GOD'S CHILDREN

by Gary Van Der Schaaf

On September 27, 1984, my wife and I thought we were the parents of a normal infant boy. By the afternoon of the following day, our normal child was gone, gone forever, and we found ourselves the parents of a baby with cerebral palsy. With dizzying and baffling swiftness, our lives were changed, radically, permanently. It was as if the Lord had said to me, "Fool, this night thy son shall be required of thee."

Indeed, regarding my son, my first born, I had played the Rich Fool. How often in the first months of my boy's life, months now impossibly distant, did not I hold him and imagine, "What will his life be like?" In my mind's eye I saw him walking and running, and imagination's keen ear let me hear his first word. These things and more did I imagine, and now I do not know if I will ever see the least of these things.

I think that most parents, to some extent, behave as did the Rich Fool of Luke 12. It is so easy to plan or imagine our children's futures, and typically those plans and dreams include only "good" things. Such behavior on our part is understandable. We mean no harm by it, yet it remains, finally, a foolish thing to do.

It is foolish because it creates in us the false impression that our children belong to us. It fosters in us the false belief that somehow we are in control of the events in our children's lives. And, worst of all, it encourages in us a sense of outrage, dismay, and inequity when God moves in ways contrary to our plans and dreams.

I do not mean here to make of my son's affliction a soapbox from which to harangue parents who have far more experience as parents than do I. Yet there are some things of which I would like to remind all believing parents. In relation to your children, live for today. I do not mean that in the careless, hedonistic sense of thoughtless abandon that marks modern society, but in the positive sense that "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Enjoy your children as they are now, right at this moment. Do not waste a minute of today anticipating or worrying what your child will be like tomorrow. One theologian has called our timeless God "The Eternal Now"; and we do well to remember that it is that God in Whom we live and move and have our being.

Secondly, if God has blessed you with children of sound body and mind, give constant thanks for that great gift. We tend to take for granted that which runs smoothly, be it a refrigerator, a car, or a child. In the days when I was unaware of my son's condition, I rarely give his mental and physical abilities a thought; I assumed all was well and would remain so, forgetting the frailty of human flesh, forgetting that it is God's good pleasure alone that preserves health and life. Each day, all day, live in conscious gratitude for the blessing of well-being that God has bestowed on your child. For certainly,

should your child suffer permanent affliction, you will be aware of that each waking moment of your life.

Finally, we must struggle to remember that our children are not our own. They belong to God, and He has ordered all their days and all their ways according to His counsel. **His** counsel, **His** plans, not ours. Our children are God's, and He will do with them as He sees fit. That is easy for the mouth to say, nigh impossible for the heart to live. I have had to say those words over and over again, even when they meant nothing to me, so hard it is for our flesh to accept and affirm those words.

But, paradoxically, we as parents find our greatest comfort in the fact that our children belong to God. Our dear Father, Whose ways are so far above our own, graciously provides us and our children with the assurance that we are His, that He is good, and that no evil can befall us in this fallen world. And therefore we not only see but rejoice in the truth that we hold our children in trust, a divine trust, inviolate, no matter what our children's condition, no matter what our rebellious dispositions might argue to the contrary. We are God's, our children are God's, and, as Charles Wesley said, "The best thing is, God is with us!" In Him we live, in His grace we glory, and in His loving bosom we rest and wait, wait for the day in which all shall be made perfect and new.

BOOK REVIEW

by David Harbach

The Glory of the True Tabernacle
by Rev. George C. Lubbers
674 pages, 1984.

Rev. Lubbers asked me to review his book last year when it first came out on the market. I must apologize for not completing the book review earlier.

The jubilee exposition of Hebrews by Rev. Lubbers is a thorough biblical treatment of Hebrews. This fact becomes obvious when you read the many cross reference explanations to the Psalms, of Christ compared to Moses, and of numerous other passages of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Haggai, and Zachariah.

You will find the exposition of Hebrews 11 especially deep in thought with valuable expositions of similar passages in Genesis, Exodus, Joshua, Judges, and I Samuel.

The table of contents is a useful aid in seeking specific verses and giving the reader the main theme of the verses. The biblical terms section in the back of the book is a valuable addition because it gives you key theme words for a particular person or subject. The book is therefore expertly organized for a biblical study of the book of Hebrews.

The two minor criticisms of the book would be first, some verses needed further attention so that they too would be treated in the scholarly style of Rev. Lubbers and secondly, the verses being studied should have been in the body of the text for easy reference.

I recommend this book as a superb resource tool for a biblical study of the book of Hebrews.

From The Pastor's Study

Rev. C. Hanko continues his theme Gems From Scripture, for the rubric The Pastor's Study. We look forward again with anticipation to these edifying articles from a pastor with many years of wisdom and experience. -D.H.

Gems from Scripture

by Rev. C. Hanko

"Abstain from all appearance of evil."
I Thessalonians 5:22

The Word of God admonishes us: Abstain from evil! Abstain from the appearance of evil. Abstain from ALL appearance of evil.

If we would only take heed to that, what a misery we would avoid!

This warning of Scripture is often taken to mean that we must avoid anything and everything that might appear to be evil.

Thus this text is used to encourage us to avoid whatever our neighbor might consider evil, whether he is right or wrong. If he is an Adventist and thinks that it is wrong to work on Saturday we should refuse to work on Saturday, lest we offend him. If someone objects to eating meat, I should avoid eating meat.

But that is not the idea of the text.

The word for 'appearance' in this text means 'shape', 'form'.

The text teaches us to abstain from evil, no matter what shape or form it may have. We must keep ourselves aloof from it, avoiding it like poison, no matter how innocent or appealing it may seem.

Any sin against any of the commandments of God may never be condoned, but must be condemned, so that we want no part of it.

That includes ALL evil.

Driving the car ten miles above the speed limit or deliberately ignoring the stop signal, or even driving with an eye on the rear view mirror is condemned here.

Sinning by substitution, letting someone else sin to our enjoyment while we read a filthy novel or watch a movie.

Borrowing from the shop or office with no intention of returning it.

By our gossip giving an extra kick to someone who is down.

Buying lottery tickets to get rich in a hurry, or drooling over a shiny new car which someone received by chance or otherwise.

Avoid those evils! Draw back from them. When Satan attacks be ready for him. Do not discuss the matter with him, as Eve did. Even when he comes as an angel of light, or through your best friend, see through his camouflage. Follow the example of our Lord and fight him with the sword of the Spirit: "It is written!"

The point I wish to make is that this includes avoiding evil as soon as it lifts its vile head in our presence. Sin must be nipped in the bud.

You know the expression: "Don't aim a gun unless you intend to shoot."

Many serious accidents have resulted from aiming an "unloaded" gun. Don't play with fire!

Many difficulties could have been avoided if we had not carelessly taken a wrong exit while travelling along the expressway. It took a slight touch on the wheel to direct the car off from the highway and down the exit. At the moment we were only inches, and then feet away from the road we should be on. The longer we continued on the wrong way the farther we were from the highway and from our distination, and the harder it was to get back.

A small side-stepping into the path of sin can seem so innocent, so appealing. Have you ever noticed how the feet of a small child are drawn to a water puddle? He tells himself "I won't get wet." And then suddenly he is wet.

A wet paint sign arouses an urge to touch the paint.

Sin in any shape or form can be so appealing!

A small weed can readily be uprooted and destroyed. The longer that weed is left to grow the larger it becomes, crowding out the good plants. The larger it becomes the deeper the roots work into the soil. The deeper the roots the harder it is to uproot.

A small flame of fire is readily extinguished, but when it flares up and spreads it rages out of control, doing dreadful damage and leaving a path of horrible destruction.

A drug addict started out at one time with a mere experiment. Possibly it was on the dare of his companions. It certainly was not intended as more than a venture. Not at any time did he intend to become an addict. Although he kept boasting that he could quit any time, he was hooked. Yet he was the last one to admit it.

The first sin looks so innocent that it almost sounds ridiculous to call it a sin. But sin breeds sin, even ever greater sins. James 1:13-16.

The road to hell is paved with good intentions. The devil is cunning. Sin is a cruel tyrant that spares no one. One sin leads to the second, even worse than the first. The second leads to a third, still worse than the second. At first we seemed to have control of the situation. We resolved that it was not going to get out of hand. But somehow we lost control. Sin had taken over, had overpowered us, so that we were now its willing victims. What seemed so wrong and troubled our conscience at first, now could be condoned. We began to rationalize sin. In others this would be a very serious offence, but in our circumstances it was justifiable. There was no stopping, no longer any restraint. The need, the urge to sin had become so irresistible, so overwhelming that all reason was lost. Sin breeds sin even unto death!

No will power, no firm resolution can deliver us from Satan and our own wretched, sinful selves. Even a remorse because of the bitter consequences of our sins cannot have any lasting value. Satan awaits his time. Our hearts are the most deceptive of anything we know. Soon the sorrow is forgotten and sin once more takes over.

Only the wonder of God's almighty grace can deliver us from sin's destructive power, creating in us a godly sorrow and a sincere, lasting repentance. II Cor. 7:10.

The lesson is: Abstain from every form or shape of evil. Nip it in the bud before it has you in its power!

And also, never start anything that you cannot finish with impunity!

Current Events and Comments

Ken Feenstra is a member of our Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan. Ken has served as president of the Reformed Witness Hour. Presently he is arranging for the speakers for our radio broadcasts. His perspective on the catechism will bring to our attention some important aspects for us to consider. -D.H.

PERSPECTIVE: THE CATECHISM

by Ken Feenstra

In our churches the creeds are held in high esteem. This is not without good reason. The creeds are the wisdom of our fathers given to them and to us by God.

Because the fathers sought after wisdom they were preserved, Proverbs 4:4-7. We must also seek after wisdom by continually learning the doctrines afresh, then we too will be preserved. To this end the creeds should be used as tools to open up the scriptures and challenge us to a greater understanding of scripture and therefore of our Lord. The fruit of which are Hope, Charity and Faith.

Because of the emphasis we as Protestant Reformed Churches have on catechism preaching, I would like to devote the rest of this article to the catechism in specific. It is important that young as well as old have an understanding of the catechism's proper place.

One perspective on the catechism's place might be, "Let us get rid of catechism preaching, it is not relevant for us today." This surely is a dangerous perspective. Would a wise man ignore the wisdom of his father? Would a wise church forget the wisdom of its church fathers? No, we must not do this. The catechism can be made pertinent for us today, both in the preaching and in our own study. How can one deny the pertinence of a statement such as "What is our only comfort in life and death?" (Question 1). This question answered from scripture can only lead to a deeper knowledge of our Lord and King.

Another perspective would state that the catechism is perfect. This idea can be easily defended against. We need only to point out that the catechism was written apart from "divine inspiration" and therefore it must be as our fathers were, imperfect.

A third perspective would be one in which the catechism is used improperly, such as one having catechism preaching that is only partially dominated by scripture. A statement I recently came across concerning catechism preaching reminded me of this. Prof. Homer Hoeksema in his seminary Homiletics Sylabus states, "He must not merely preach on the truth on which the catechism touches in a particular Lord's Day, but he must preach on the catechism itself. He must read the Lord's Day as he reads his text before the sermon, and then proceed to preach a sermon on the catechism

itself. . . . And while it is not always possible to be explicit on this in the course of ones sermon the minister should certainly let his sermon as much as possible be controlled by scripture."

I ask, is "as much as possible" enough? Aren't scriptures to completely control ones sermon? Can the catechism be used as a text just as scripture would be?

A historical perspective and I feel the proper perspective on catechism preaching can be summed up by the two following quotes. Rev. Rich Veldman (from 1943 Standard Bearer debate article), "Catechism preaching is a preaching that lets scripture speak, that does not exegete a Lord's Day, but always aims to point out the relation between the two."

Rev. Herman Hoeksema in his introduction to a Lord's Day 1 sermon states, "We must have sound doctrine, for without it we perish. The catechism is sound doctrine, not because it is infallible, but because it is living doctrine. Therefore we must preach, not out of the catechism but with the catechism as our guide. Preaching must always be a preaching of the Word. That does not mean that it must be out of one single text; it may also be a group of texts; and that is what we have in our catechism."

This holds true also for ministers preaching to those who have been brought up in the Reformed faith and understand the truths contained in the catechism. Only scripture can make the catechism preaching applicable to us personally today.

We as Protestant Reformed people must be careful not to depart from the Reformation battle cry "Sola Scriptura". As we uphold our creeds, we must not lose sight of their limitations.

BARREN

by Martha Bruinsma

I am a childless, barren woman.

We are a childless, barren couple.

How do we feel?

There could never be enough words to explain.

There could never be a person with enough time and patience to sit and listen quietly.

It hurts.

It places a feeling of loneliness, and sadness within our hearts.

It gives the sensation of being unfulfilled, or incompetency.

We are unfruitful.

I feel a sense of being disloyal and unfaithful to my husband. After all is not bearing children a small part of a Christian woman and wife?

I wanted to give him a child of his own flesh and blood, a part of him and a part of me.

We wanted, with all of our hearts to have children.

We wanted, to give our parents. . . . . .grandchildren.

Now, it has been made a certainty, it will never be made possible to have children of our own.

We wanted to have a home filled with love, laughter, yelling, crying. All of those things which go along with having a family.

Instead all we hear in our home is silence.

I longed to be able to hold an infant close. To be able to nurse a child and to have it receive its life's nourishment from my own body.

I wanted my body to become big and awkward with child. To carry a child within me. To feel it growing, and knowing that there is a life in me. A miracle from God.

We wanted to feel that joy and wonder.

I wanted to experience the pain of bearing and bringing that child into our lives.

We wanted to watch it grow day by day.

He wanted to be called Father.

I wanted to be called Mother.

I wanted. . . He wanted. . . We wanted. . . .

Alas, it will never be.

What we wanted, is not what our heavenly Father wanted for us.

Our hearts are heavy with the pain and frustration of this time in our lives.

We realize that our wants in this life are insignificant, but what our Heavenly Father wants for us is of utmost importance.

It seems there is no-one who can help, who can take away all of those negative feelings which we feel.

Except ONE. . . . . .

Our heavenly Father, Who has a purpose for all of this.

Our Father, and He alone, can take away our grief and sorrow.

Always, we feel His presence, and His grace to bear whatever He may see fit to send our way.

We do not understand this burden which He has given to us, but His grace is with us, it strengthens us moment by moment, and day by day. His grace makes it possible for us to accept His will for our lives at all times.

What a blessing, what a marvelous, wonderful blessing. To feel His presence, His grace, His love and His kindness in our lives.

So, those of you who can have children, HAVE THEM! LOVE THEM!

Cherish one of the most precious gifts from God. . . . . .A CHILD.

Those of you from whom the Lord has chosen to withhold a family, know and believe that it is His will, He is in control, and that His grace is now and always will be sufficient for you.

Suzaane Ondersma's article on the life of Urich Zwingli begins a series of 4 articles that are the result of a Church History semester project assigned by Mr. Cal Kalsbeek, a teacher at Covenant Christian High School. The project was to write a biographical sketch of someone important to the history of the church. The students had four points to consider in the writing of their sketch: 1. life - how it prepared them for work in the Church 2. Interesting tidbits in his/her life 3 Specific battles of faith 4. Importance or significance to the history of the Church. -D.H.

ULRICH ZWINGLI

by Suzanne Ondersma

Ulrich Zwingli was the first Swiss Protestant reformer of Switzerland. He was born on January 1, 1484 in the township of Wildhaus, St. Gallen Canton, Switzerland. He was the third of eight sons of a prosperous farmer, who was also the chief magistrate.

At 9 years of age, Zwingli lived with his uncle, the Dean of Wesen. Being a precocious (very gifted with knowledge) lad, he entered the Latin School of Basel, where he studied Latin, music and dialectics when he was 10 years old. From there he went to study philosophy at the University of Vienna because it was the center of the humanists. But a whole new world of thought, through Erasmus, jolted him and he became involved with the Greek New Testament.

After graduation, he was appointed parish priest in Glarus (in 1519) for 10 years. Then he served as chaplain with the Swiss forces which developed in him a strong opposition to the mercenary system. This caused problems in Glarus, so he went to Einsiedeln and was the parish priest for 3 years.

Then he was called to Zurich in 1519 where he remained for the rest of his life. (1) At Zurich he became the "people's priest" in the cathedral, Gross Munster, where he began his program of expounding the Scriptures, book by book, chapter by chapter (In 6 years he completed the New Testament).(2)

A near approach to death during the Plague of 1519 seems to have deepened his religion, making him more determined than ever to fulfill his vocation.

As he preached, gradually the Bible began to open up to him. The church had been astray.

In 1520, he came to the support of the German reformer, Martin Luther. Zwingli much admired Luther's defiance of the Church authority, so he too openly opposed the Pope. Throughout his reform, Zwingli paid deference to the 'godly magistrate' and was content to let them set pace and time for a public reform because he, like Erasmus, hoped to bring about improvements gradually through education.

Under Zwingli's leadership, Zurich gradually became a second center of Reformation, next to Wittenburg. Zwingli secured freedom from the city's governing council to preach the "true divine Scriptures". His sermons helped stir revolts against fasting and

priest celibacy. He also formulated the ideas against indulgences.

In 1522, Zwingli began to abolish Roman Catholic ceremonies and wrote a treatise against fasting and the mass. The government issued a call for a disputation (a public discussion by theologians and churchmen) to test the truth of Zwingli's teachings, and in preparation, Zwingli wrote 67 Articles which stated that the Bible is the only authority, that Christ is the head of the church, that the mass is not a sacrifice because Christ is already the supreme sacrifice, that one can earn nothing from good works, and that the civil authority must regulate the church. As was seen in 1528, Zwingli even went so far as to leave to the magistrates the power of excommunication.

By 1523, Zwingli had laid the foundation of a new order in the canton of Zurich. Most of Switzerland sided with Zwingli, so he broke away from the Roman Catholic Church. He ceased to be a Catholic priest and became a Protestant minister. Zwingli introduced a new mode of worship and a new form of church government. He instituted the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and taught a godly way of life according to the sacred Scriptures.(3) He abolished images and covered "showy" paintings.

Zwingli's views represented a far more radical break with past traditions than did the Lutheran movement.(4) Zwingli can be rightfully remembered as the first of the Reformed theologians.

In the following year, he married Anna Meyer and had four children in all.

From 1525 the work of Zwingli was hampered by unfortunate disagreements between the Zwinglians within Switzerland, and with the Lutherans outside. In Zurich, an extremist group quickly became dissatisfied with the Zwinglian program. They wanted to abolish tithes, to sever relations with the state, to create a pure church of believers, and to end infant baptism. Zwingli wrote a special work on "Baptism" which stated that his main emphasis was the significance of water baptism as a covenant sign.

Zwingli and Luther reached deadlock in a debate at Marburg in 1529. This debate dealt with the Lord's Supper. Luther and Zwingli both agreed to reject the eucharistic sacrifice and the medieval notion of a change of substance in the sacrament. Luther believed that "This is my body", meant an actual presence of Christ's body and blood. Zwingli, on the other hand, taught that the word "is" means "signifies". So the bread and the wine are only symbolic and the Supper is only a memorial ceremony.(5)

After this debate, the Swiss Reformation movement lost the support of the German princes and they broke away. The Reformation split up and Zwingli's group later became part of the Calvinist movement.

Although the people of cities such as Bern and Basel, were on the way to a Reformation, Zwingli became more and more concerned about isolating Zurich from the Catholic cantons. So he strove to build up a Christian civic league of reforming cities, including Strassburg.(6) This involvement in politics brought war in 1531. The battle of Kappel was between Zurich and the five Catholic cantons of Switzerland. Zwingli hoped to conquer the opposing cantons and unite them with his Protestant confederation, but his forces were defeated. He himself took part in

the war as a chaplain, but was killed along with 23 other chaplains. This halted the expansion of the reformation of German Switzerland.

As can be seen, Zwingli was a humanist, Bible scholar, protestant, liberal, and a patriot; but he lacked the passionate earnestness and driving force of Luther.(7)

However, Zwingli in Switzerland, along with Luther in Germany, began to develop the reformed doctrines of the church and paved the way for the third great reformer, John Calvin.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Livingstone, E. A., "The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church," p. 1514

(2) "Zwingli, "Encyclopedia Americana, 1980 ed.

(3) "Zwingli, "Encyclopedia Britannica, 1978 ed.

(4) Douglas, J. D., "The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church," p. 1073

(5) Keenly, Robin, "Eerdman's Handbook to the Christian Belief," p. 374

(6) Brandon, S. G., "Dictionary of Comparative Religion," p. 664

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It must always be remembered that, although Christ has borne the punishment of sin, and although God has forgiven the saints for their sins, yet God may God-fatherly correct His people for sin. Christ endured the great shower of wrath, the black and dismal hours of displeasure for sin. That which falls on us is a sunshine shower, warmth with wet, wet with the warmth of his love to make us fruitful and humble. Christ drank the dregs of that bitter cup, so much of it as would damn us, and left only so much for us to drink as would humble us for our sin. That which the believer suffers for sin is not penal, arising from a vindictive justice, but medicinal, arising from a fatherly love. It is his medicine, not his punishment; his chastisement, not his sentence; his correction, not his condemnation.

-Bolton

A copy of the October Convention issue of the Beacon Lights will be sent to every conventioneer.