BEACON LIGHTS

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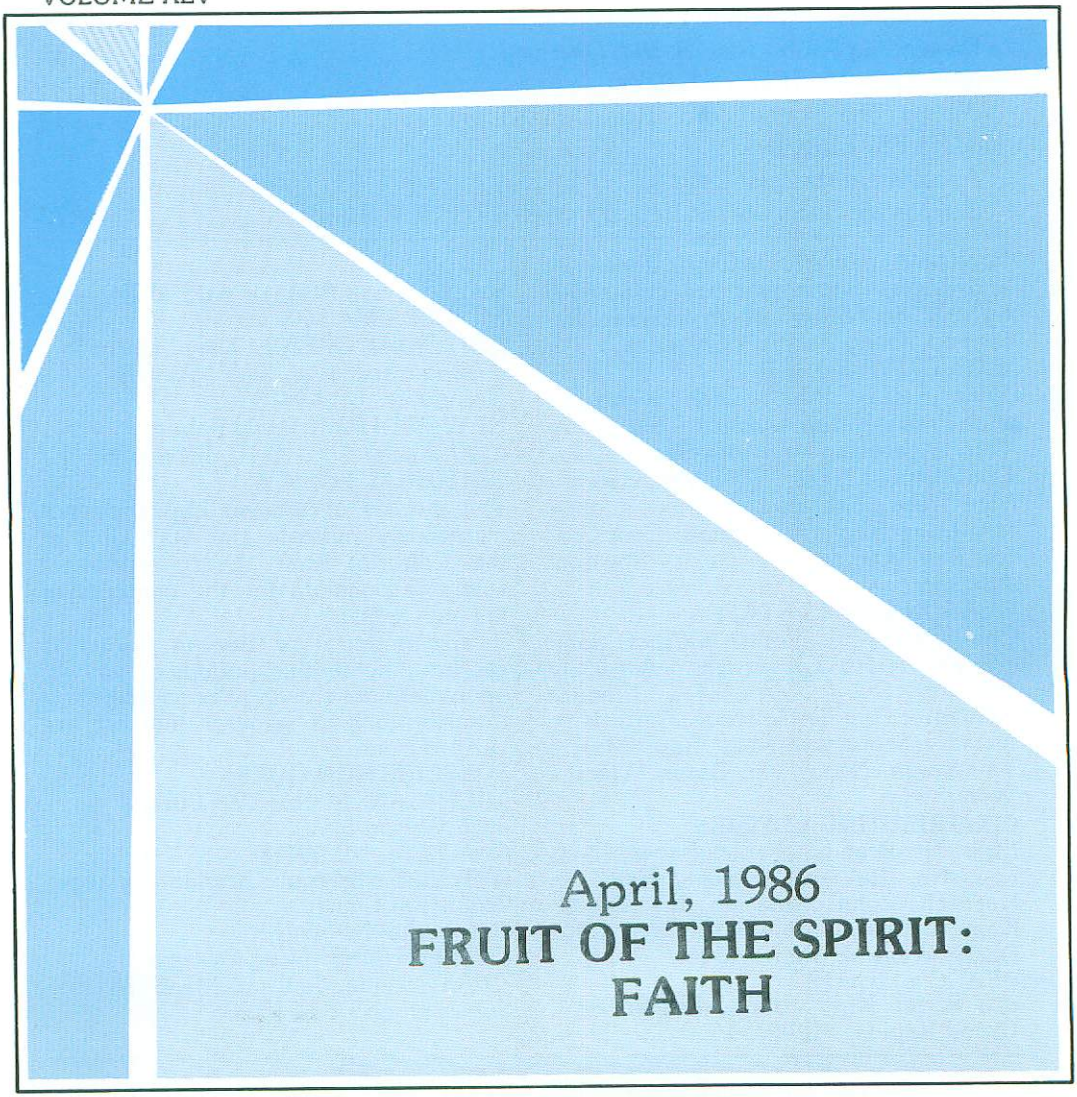

April, 1986

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITH

BEACON LIGHTS

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by David Harbach

This is the eighth issue concerning the series on the "Fruit of the Spirit," focusing on the fruit of "faith."

I have heard several encouraging comments concerning this series and hope that other readers will take the time to write us not only about this series but other rubrics as well.

Ed Lotterman has written an encouraging article to us on "Declaring Mother Happy" which was written to precede Mothers' Day next month.

Rev. Kuiper continues his series on the life of Joseph and Rev. Harbach proceeds with his writings on the book of Jude, vs. 7.

Deanne Wassink has written an interesting article on the news media. In these last days, we do need insight into the evil use of the press to try to deceive and attack God's people. Deanne provides a careful look at this threat and provides encouragement to remain faithful unto the end.

In future issues look for a two part series on "Christians in the Soviet Union: Marked for Extinction" by Sarah Ondersma and a new series by Mrs. H. Brands on "Responsibilities of Conception."

"The dumb boy's examination"

A clergyman once paid a visit to a deaf and dumb asylum in London, for the express purpose of examining the children in the knowledge they possessed of divine truth. A little boy, on this occasion was asked in writing: "Who made the world?" He took up the chalk, and wrote underneath the question: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The clergyman then inquired in a similar manner: "Why did Jesus Christ come into the world?" The little fellow wrote: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." A third question was then proposed, eminently adapted to call his most powerful feeling into exercise: "Why were you born deaf and dumb, while I can hear and speak?" "Never," said an eye-witness, "Shall I forget the look of holy resignation and sorrow which sat on his countenance as he took up the chalk and wrote: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' "

Editorial

Proverbs For Young Pilgrims

DECLARING MOTHER HAPPY

by Ed Lotterman

Prov. 31:28a "Her children arise up, and call her blessed."

Mothers' Day! O yes, we must get her a card. Without even thinking we have slipped into the commercialism of Mothers' Day. Strange that the world promotes a Mothers' Day and we in our ho-hum ways accept it. Strange because only the sanctified in Christ understand the real value of a godly mother.

What are our mothers, Young Pilgrim? What did your mother do? Your mother fed you. Then she cleaned you. Then she "changed" you. Then she clothed you. When you wouldn't cooperate and sleep at nap time, she patiently rocked you and perhaps softly sang "The Lord is my Shepherd." She gave you a cool sponge bath in order to break your fever when you were ill.

Tender woman, your mother!

As you became older she scheduled your orthodontist appointment around her menu planning, laundry, baking, and household chores. Besides, she fit her knitting, mending and shopping activities into your extracurricular events. She took you to your piano lessons and perhaps helped chaperone your outings and class trips.

Busy woman, your mother!

But any good mother does all these things. What did your mother do that made her distinguished from the others? She was your teacher, Young Pilgrim!

She read Bible Stories to you. She helped you memorize your catechism and Sunday School verses. She taught you the songs of Zion. She taught you early to say your prayers. She encouraged spiritual development. She demanded godly behavior. She expected proper godly manners.

Virtuous woman, your mother!

Have you called her blessed, that is, do you declare her happy?

What a response!

This proverb is not a goad, not a prod. This is not an exhortation, nor a command. The response must be spontaneous, coming from the desire of a believing heart which is thankful to our Covenant God for such a gift of His Love: A Mother!

So now, how is this done? How do you go about making this declaration? This is the difficult part. It almost makes you nervous, doesn't it? You do it so seldom (so do I). After all, she knows. . . , she knows you love her. Young Pilgrim, I ask you, when was the last time you said "Mom, I love you"?

Loving woman, your mother!

Do you inquire concerning your mother's well-being, Young Pilgrim? Yes, I know the rhetorical "Hi, Mom, how are you?" But we are talking now concerning her spiritual well-being. After all, having taught you so much in

your early life, (can she still teach you something, or do you now know it all?) and sharing so many spiritual insights with you, what is your response? You must make her feel needed. She still has a desire to share spiritual insights with you. Make her aware of your needs and concerns, your activities, your problems. She needs to know. She wants to share.

Anxious woman, your mother!

When others in your group are registering complaints about their "ol' ladies" you must speak highly of your mother! Tell them what she has done for you, Tell them what she means to you. Tell them what a great mother God has given you. Tell them how thankful to God you are for such a gift of His love. Tell them. . . .

Blessed woman, your mother!

Do things. Do things with your mother. Do things for your mother. Mold your schedule to include some of her household activities. Volunteer your services so she can have a break once in a while. Don't be selfish about your God given time. Share it with your mother.

Tired woman, your mother!

And Young Pilgrim, walk as a child of Light. Walk in paths of righteousness. Do what your mother has taught you to do. Say what your mother has taught you to say. Think as your mother has taught you to think. From early infancy until now, she has taught you Godliness. By taking heed to her teachings you also arise up and call her blessed.

Happy woman, your mother!

LORD'S DAY 3

It was into the garden of bliss,
where walked our first parents with God
amid creation glory
which they exclaimed in names of praise
for him to hear,
Satan came,
suggesting his own fantasy dream:
They could be as gods,
doing what they wished.
It wouldn't hurt, they wouldn't die,
all they need do was to try.
And so they did, took the sweet, bitter fruit
until angry, resentful and afraid
they crept behind bushes in shame
separated from each other,
from that first bliss
and from their God.
And so are we now children of that shame,
born to the same fanatic thoughts,
and incapable of anything else,
except by God we are changed.

Current Events and Comments
THE NEWS

by Deane Wassink

Murder, rape, child abuse, discrimination, the Mafia, civil strife in South Africa, an earthquake in Mexico City, a mudslide kills thousands, soldiers are blown up in Ulster, the space shuttle blows up killing all seven astronauts, the president has a cancerous growth removed (they also checked a pimple on his nose), this movie star had a baby, that one died of AIDS, Mc Mahon mocks Rozelle . . . . From events world shaking to the mundane, from the significant to the frivolous we are bombarded daily by the news from television, radio, newspapers and news magazines. All of them are crying for our attention motivated primarily by profits as it results from higher ratings or circulation.

As children of God in this world what are we to make of the news? Consider a few things with me.

In the first place we must realize that we are naturally gullible. We tend to think that seeing is believing. Hence we are easily taken in by the pictures we see printed or the action played out before us on the screen. Especially when we are young, (though we by no means lose the characteristic when we are older) we tend to identify with certain individuals or philosophies. In fact it never ceases to amaze me how teenagers, when trying to come to grips with their own values, often have great distrust for the values of their parents but blindly follow the leading of a public figure who catches their fancy. They begin to dress, talk, and act like this total stranger whom they have trusted. God knows this weakness in us. That is why Solomon wrote "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Proverbs 1:10.

In order to get a proper perspective on the news we need a standard of truth to be our guide. That standard is the Scriptures. In it we learn that natural man is walking in the way of darkness with a breast filled with hatred toward God. We learn also that world events are developing toward the full manifestation of Anti-christ and the final coming of our Lord. We learn as well that the devil uses the things of this world to tempt us into sin and weaken our faith. Bearing these facts in mind look at a few of the dangers of the news.

One danger that has really impressed me lately is the distortion and bias in the news. When I was in Northern Ireland teaching, a great deal of concern was expressed for our physical safety. The impression most of our people had of Northern Ireland was

that everyone there was in grave danger of being blown up or shot by the IRA. This impression was given by the news because the only thing shown on television about Northern Ireland was the violence. In reality, though soldiers and police were shot, it was much more safe for me to live there with my family than in Grand Rapids. I am convinced the twisted perspective in the news is a result of sensationalism and a biased Catholic press out to ruin the tourist industry of Northern Ireland. The once booming industry is now dead. Without a question this deception is the norm rather than the exception in the news. Yet, we tend to believe what we see and hear.

Another danger is what I call the trivia mentality. I refer to the fact that we tend to waste our time and our mental energy on meaningless morsels of gossip and events dished out in glossy format by the media. Perhaps you, as I, have been tempted by the check-out aisle newspapers that dish out the latest slop about UFO's, unusual births and Hollywood gossip. Closer to home, even the daily paper that comes to the door or the major news magazines contain pages upon pages of worthless tidbits that are of no benefit to us, tantalizing though they be. I guess I'm not surprised about the craze in trivia games. Though they may be food for intellectual stimulation we had better be careful of the worth of what we are learning.

The last danger I'd like to mention is the fact that we tend to get accustomed to things that normally would be objectionable, if they become commonplace to us. I think for example of my innate abhorrence of dirty diapers. However, with the five little ones we have, I have developed a tolerance which enables me to take care of the problem without actually enjoying it. The sins and violence we observe in the news are like the dirty diapers. We see so much of them that we begin to lose our sensitivity toward them. In fact, even worse, our curiosity even begins to develop an appetite, or craving for that sort of thing. Rather than abhorrence we become amused by the terrible things reported to us. Are you being hardened this way?

If these are some of the serious problems with the "news" what should we do about it?

1. Receive the news with a large pinch of salt, realizing that it is deceptive. Look behind the news for the manifestations of the end of time revealed in the Scriptures.

2. Fill your time with good wholesome things that develop your talents and understanding rather than occupy your mind with the weightless tidbits of trivia.

3. If you're having trouble with being caught up by the news trap limit your exposure. Using the on/off switch, cancelling a subscription, or selling the T.V. can do wonders toward acquiring quality time to use in the service of Christ.

4. Put the news in its proper place. Do not let it take precedence over the things of real value, the things of the kingdom of heaven. After all, the excitement of the Bears defeating the Patriots in the Superbowl is nothing compared to the salvation of even one soul.

May God give us the grace to fight the good fight of faith in these last times. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." **Eph**esians 6:11.

The Fruit of the Spirit
"But I Have Prayed For Thee. . . ."

by Don Doezema

"Whither goest thou?"

"Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now."

"Why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake."

• • • • • • •

The scene is the upper room. The exchange was between two men, one a mere man, the other the Son of man. Both make what amounts to a declaration of faithfulness to the other. Listen.

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. . ."

"Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death."

". . . but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not."

• • • • • • •

In our consideration of the fruit of the Spirit, as the manifestations of that fruit are outlined by Paul in Galatians 5. we have come now to "faith." The faith of which the apostle **speaks** in this context is not faith in God (the "certain knowledge" and "assured confidence" of which our Heidelberg Catechism speaks), but rather **faithfulness** — faithfulness "in what we profess and promise to others" (Matthew Henry). A "faithful" person is therefore one who is trustworthy, dependable in all of his dealings with others. Cheating on a test in school; using a false balance in the store; concealing from a prospective buyer the fact that the house has termites and the roof leaks like a sieve; understating income and overstating contributions when preparing Form 1040; taking "smoke-breaks," or whatever, on company time — to none of these may a **faithful** child of God give place in his life. Reliability, loyalty, honesty, strict adherence to the truth in all our assertions, all of our promises, all of our engagements — these are marks of the Christian who demonstrates in his life the fruit of the Spirit which is called "faith."

Of the ungodly it can surely be said that "there **is no faithfulness** in their mouth" (Ps. 5:9). But how about us? How do we measure up when it comes to this matter of "faith"? That's an important question, for honesty and dependability are not just social obligations. They are that **too**. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble," says Solomon in Proverbs 25, "is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." But, more importantly by far, they are **spiritual** obligations. **God** is concerned about our faithfulness. In fact, He has made it clear in His Word that a man who is **un**faithful is not fit for fellowship with Him. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle?" asks the Psalmist. 'Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1). In response, the Lord Himself, by His Holy Spirit, gives the qualifications for citizenship in Zion, for habitation in the heavenly Jerusalem; and among them there's this: "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and

changeth not" (vs. 4) — that is, he who, when he promises to do a certain thing, and later finds that he cannot do it without damage to his worldly estate, will nevertheless not waver from his vow. He keeps his word, always, even when it hurts.

We ask again: What about us? How do we measure up? The truth is that, viewing ourselves in the mirror of God's perfect law, we see that, apart from any other consideration, our **unfaithfulness alone** is enough to bar us forever from His presence. But the law leads us to Christ. Writes Spurgeon, "Truly humbled souls often shrink under a sense of utter unworthiness, and would not dare to approach the throne of the God of holiness if it were not for Him, our Lord, our Advocate, Who can abide in the heavenly temple, because His righteousness endureth forever." Yes, only Christ's righteousness can withstand the refining fire of the Great Refiner. And His righteousness has been given to us. Who then can stand, accepted, in the presence of the Majesty on high? Only the sinless Lord Jesus. . .and those who are by God's grace conformed, not to this world (Rom. 12:2), but to the image of the Son of God (Rom. 8:29). And "conformed to His image" means, among other things, that faithfulness will be evident in our lives. We will be, in every relationship of life, trustworthy, dependable — even as Jesus, our Lord, was faithful. Not perfectly, of course, for we are no better than Peter. . .but it will most emphatically be clear in our lives that we strive to be like Jesus, also with regard to this fruit of "faith." "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt 7:20).

* * * * * * *

Peter failed. And it was in the way of his unfaithfulness that the faithfulness of Jesus was made all the more remarkable. Let's look a little more closely at this particular aspect of Christ's suffering in the night in which He was betrayed.

We find Jesus leading His disciples from the Upper Room to the Garden of Gethsemane. He did that, knowing full well that the traitor would anticipate that move. To have escaped Judas at this time would therefore have been so exceedingly simple. Jesus would only have had to choose a destination other than the Garden. But His hour had come, and Jesus voluntarily chooses the way which He knows will lead to the cross. Knowing, further, that events in the Garden will soon enough make it clear also to the disciples that He is in effect choosing **death**, Jesus forewarned the Eleven that they would all be offended because of Him that night. Once again it is the impetuous Peter who speaks up: "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I!" And once more Jesus warns Peter of his imminent fall: "Verily I say unto thee, that this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." But, just as adamantly as ever, Peter continues to contradict the word of the Lord. "If I should die with thee," he insisted, "I will not deny thee in any wise."

Once in the garden, Peter found himself left alone with John and James, with these instructions from the Master: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." He should therefore have remained alert, not only to provide the company that Jesus seemed to desire of them, but also to prepare himself by prayer for the severe trial of his faith of which Jesus had forewarned them. But

he slept.

Shortly thereafter, however, when in the dead of night a "great multitude" arrived in the garden, Peter snapped very much to attention. Hearing the captain give the order, seeing the soldiers advance to take hold of Jesus, Peter made his move. Before him was a detachment of Roman soldiers numbering probably 200, and perhaps a like number of temple police. But that meant nothing to Peter. Out flashed his sword. He was ready to take on the whole lot, singlehandedly if need be, in what he saw to be the cause of his Master. "Lord," he asked, "shall we smite with the sword?" And, without waiting for an answer he struck the first blow. But that was all. "Put up again thy sword into his place," Jesus commanded. Not only that, Jesus also did what was necessary to **repair** what little damage Peter had managed to do in his misdirected zeal. There could be no doubt about it — Jesus **wanted** to remain defenseless before the enemy. To the disciples, at that moment, Jesus was an embarrassment. They were offended in Him. He would not let them even **try** to help Him. What useful purpose could possibly be served therefore by remaining with Him, and sharing in His fate? So "they all forsook him and fled."

Two of them, however, apparently had second thoughts about that sudden flight into the darkness of the night. Turning back, they found that they were easily able to follow so large a company of "captors" to their destination, which, as it turned out, was the Palace of the High Priest. The Palace was not open to the public, of course, especially at that hour of the night; but, because of some acquaintance with the high priest, John was able to gain entrance for himself. And, once inside, he was able to use his influence to arrange for Peter's admission also. Their ways must then have parted, for Peter soon found himself running into difficulties by himself in the inner court. He had gone to the fire, partly for warmth, and partly in the hope that, by mingling there with the temple police he might be able to learn something of the progress of the case against Jesus. From Peter's perspective, there was no reason to believe that the night would be for him anything other than uneventful. He was therefore mentally prepared for nothing — in spite of the fact that Christ had specifically warned him that he would this very night fall into the snare of the devil. As it happened, the maid who kept the door had kept her eye on him. Having gathered from John's remarks that Peter was also a sympathizer with the man who had been brought in captive that night, she felt that she was privy to information that the men at the fire knew nothing about. So, perhaps for no other reason than to make herself look important, she decided to go to the fire and expose Peter.

"Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee," she announced before them all. A cold sweat come over Peter. What would happen were he to acknowledge the truth of her claim? Would the officers seize him? Would they throw him in prison? Would they make him the butt of their jokes? Or would they simply pass this information off as being of no consequence? Peter had no time to **consider** the possibilities. He knew only that he was surrounded by the very men who had participated in the taking of Jesus and who would therefore have to be viewed as the enemy. So. . .what did he do?

He made a quick, simple, almost ambiguous denial of it — "I know not what thou sayest." Now the matter may be dropped, he thought, whereas to admit the truth of the girl's allegation would be to court disaster for no good purpose.

How like us! How often do we not, either by silence or by some off-hand, casual remark make it appear as if we are part of the world — in order to avoid embarrassment. As Calvin put it, "Peter's fall. . .brilliantly mirrors our own infirmity." That reflection becomes all the clearer as we mark the progress in Peter's unfaithfulness. Feeling terribly uncomfortable because of the lie he had told, and feeling threatened in the place where he was, he eased himself away from the fire and sauntered casually out to the porch. The first thing he heard on the porch was the crowing of a cock; but it didn't really register in his mind because he found himself at once in further difficulties. Again it was a maid. He heard the girl remark to others standing by that "this fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." One of the men then chose to follow the girl's lead by challenging Peter directly: "Thou art also of them." Peter gritted his teeth and, hoping to set the matter to rest once and for all, declared with an oath, "Man, I am not!"

Then it was back to the fireside, and join in with the conversation, to give the appearance of being just one of the guys. But he succeeded only in giving himself away. "Surely thou **art** one of them," another man insisted at length, "for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto." Convinced from the beginning that Peter was lying, they were determined not to let him get away with it. And what clinched it was the observation of a relative of Malchus, from whose head Peter had sliced an ear. "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" Ah, by now Peter is frightened, frantic, ready to do almost anything to extricate himself. Cursing and swearing he shouted, "I know not this man of whom ye speak!"

The words were not yet out of his mouth when, for the second time, the cock crew. This time Peter heard. And why did he hear? Because he had a Friend Who, in circumstances infinitely more trying, had remained faithful. Consider: that godless Sadducee Caiaphas had just finished rending his garment in pretended horror at Jesus's supposed blasphemy in affirming that He was the Son of God. Not content merely with condemning Him to death, the Sanhedrists then fell to abusing the Christ. They spit in His face. They buffeted Him. They struck Him with the palms of their hands and demanded, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Forgetting the dignity of their high office, they act like savages. All the rage which for three years had been building up in them comes out in a torrent now that Jesus is at last seemingly in their power, to do with Him as they will. They leave Him bloodied and bruised.

Then there were the Eleven. They had recently pledged to Him a devotion from which they would not be turned even by the threat of death. But He had seen the backs of those men as they fled into the darkness of the night in Gethsemane, rather than run the risk of being taken captive with Jesus. And Peter? This is the disciple who would not so much as be **offended** at Jesus — even if every other person in the **whole world** would be offended. Where is he

now? Out in the courtyard, calling God to witness, and wishing himself to be accursed of God, if he even so much as **knew** "that man."

Think now. Have you ever been told that someone you know, said something really unkind about you? A talebearer is able to separate chief friends (Prov. 17:9) only because we **can't take that**. It is so hard for us to be like Jesus. When **His** friends were acting like enemies, when they were showing themselves to be disloyal, undependable, and untrue, **He** remained faithful Who had promised. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

But is it perhaps true that Jesus was not **bothered** by such things as the desertion of the Eleven and the denial of Peter? Don't believe that for a moment. If the Holy Spirit can be "grieved" because of our sins (Eph. 4:30), how much more the Son of God **incarnate**, "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15)? Jesus knew what was going on in that courtyard. And He was **wounded** by it. True, He understood that Peter, being a true child of God, would come to repentance. But that didn't take the sting out of the offense as it occurred. Peter was out there disassociating himself from Jesus, and adding a volley of profanity for emphasis. What if **we** had been on the receiving end of that kind of abuse? Do we need **that much** from a fellow saint before we let him know in one way or another that it's just fine with us that any previous bonds which may have united us in the past are and remain broken. . .and if reconciliation **is** ever to be effected, it will only be after the one who has offended us comes crawling? Jesus didn't do that. Instead He "turned and looked upon Peter." "It was," writes Calvin, "no ordinary look (since He had already looked on Judas, who became none the better for it). but with the turning of His eyes on Peter, there went the secret power of the Spirit piercing his heart with the radiance of His grace." It was a look which was intended to bring Peter to himself, to his spiritual senses. And it accomplished exactly that, for, crushed now by the consciousness of the terrible thing he had done, Peter "went out, and wept bitterly."

For Peter, that was indeed a bitter experience. But, by the mercy of God, it served him well. And it's written for our instruction. We see our own weakness, of course, in Peter's fall; and we see too a wonderful display of grace for fallen sinners. Beyond that, however, we are given yet another example of what it means to be **Christ-like** in our relationships with others. Peter, after his fall from the heights of his sinful pride, would be the first to say, "Don't be like me." Most probably reflecting on his own failure of "faith" in this instance, he warned, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." **Jesus** on the other hand, might very well say with respect to the matter of faithfulness, as He did concerning meekness, "Be like **Me**!"

"It is an old saying, Repentance is never too late; but it is a true saying, Repentance is never too soon."

Henry Smith

The Fruit of the Spirit
FAITHFULNESS

by Marybeth Lubbers

Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. I Cor. 4:2

If there is one criterion for anyone who is hired to handle a great deal of money or oversee the finances of some important corporation it is that he must be trustworthy. In a day of rank dishonesty, swindling of accounts, and embezzlement of funds a faithful, honest man is of infinite value. Even after a corporation has scrupulously screened its potential candidates with character references, lie detector tests, and the most refined selection processes, how can it ever be certain that a man is wholly trustworthy?

It must strike the Genesis reader that no other Bible character so closely approaches the high standard of moral uprightness and faithfulness required of the God fearing man than Joseph. Not even the patriarchs themselves could equal him in this capacity. Perhaps he did not evidence the spectacular faith of an Abraham sacrificing his only son on Mt. Moriah; perhaps he lacked the prophetic value of an Isaac when he was old and his eyes were dim; perhaps he fell short of the wonderful power of prayer of a Jacob at Jabbok; but neither did he suffer from their deceitfulness and lies so that at times one experiences a sense of disappointment in these church fathers.

In Ephesians 6:6 and 7 the Apostle Paul gives guidance for the conduct of servants that they are to discharge their duties to their masters on earth as in view of their Master in heaven "with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men."

No man was more faithful in exemplifying this rule of conduct than young Joseph. And it was because Joseph was a **servant of the God** of his illustrious forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—rather than merely a servant of Potiphar—that he was so conscientious and discreet, two qualities pleasing to God in any occupation. In Joseph's rapid rise from shackled servant to steward in Potiphar's house, his irreproachable conduct and honest demeanor prompted Potiphar to give over all his affairs to this foreign slave from Canaan. Scripture states clearly that Potiphar did not know or even concern himself any longer with anything that went on in his great important household except the daily meal which went into his mouth. He had perfect trust in Joseph who had arrived in his household as a lad of about seventeen years.

It was only on account of Joseph's virtue, diligence, and faithfulness that God blessed the household of Potiphar. Potiphar himself recognized the supernatural force which made everything prosper in the hands of this Hebrew lad. "And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made

all that he did to prosper in his hands" Genesis 39:3. Some older versions of the Bible give a curious, however colorful, translation here: "The Lord was with Joseph; and he was a luckie fellow" (F.B. Meyer, **Joseph**, p. 26). Potiphar saw (to his benefit) that the Lord was with Joseph, but Joseph freely acknowledged it too, "God did send me hither. . ." Genesis 45:8.

And so, for a time, all seemed to be going well for the trustworthy young slave from Canaan. His inherent character shone as the sun in the godless house of Potiphar. Everyone was only too happy to have an overseer who was industrious, reliable, and diligent. Who could find any fault with a man who did his work thoroughly in the **spirit** of true godly labor? Nor did Joseph trudge despondently around Potiphar's house putting in the minimal amount of service to avoid the whistle of the whip around his ears; but rather he gave service to his earthly lord, Potiphar, with an eye to pleasing his heavenly Lord, Jesus Christ. What a difference that makes even today in **how** one does nis duties—are you pacifying your boss, or are you with singleness of heart pleasing your Father in heaven? "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh. . .in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" Colossians 3:22 and 23. The motive that inspires our work will bear fruit in the manner we carry out that task. Joseph did not bewail his lot in life, shedding useless tears over the former good years he had spent in his father's tents (even though it appears that he was greatly spoiled and shown deference to), but manfully he immersed himself in his work in the most menial of tasks, promoting Potiphar's household—for which he probably received not one shekel remuneration. Joseph was faithful to Potiphar "with no string attached", convicted that God had placed him where he was.

Who of us is not familiar with the sordid scene of Potiphar's wife turned temptress? Her "lie with me" turns the hardest heart to putty. For Joseph this was a temptation accompanied by opportunity. To please her would certainly serve his advancement; to cross her would surely place his exalted position and hopes in jeopardy. But Joseph's moral calibre and godly character caused him to resist temptation and sacrifice advancement (perhaps even **freedom**, which Potiphar's wife could surely have influenced). He tries to dissuade her from her infamous proposal by three arguments:

1. He urges her to remember that she is the master's wife! She should not forget who she is—she is no common Egyptian whore.
2. He shrinks from repaying his master, who trusts him implicitly, with such a vile and evil deed.
3. In words immemorial he pleads, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

We must remember, too, that Potiphar's wife's proposition was not a one time, "heat of the moment" enticement. She enticed Joseph day after day. "And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her. . ." Genesis 39:10. Finally, the day comes when, although circumspect in all his comings and goings, Joseph cannot escape the trap she lays for him and he is forced to run from the house—leaving his garment in her traitorous hands.

So what did Joseph gain by his

integrity and his resistance to his master's wife's shameless proposals? In the next scene we find the once faithful steward a lowly prisoner in Potiphar's dungeon. How painful it must have been for Joseph (as it is for us who read this vivid account) to be innocently maligned, helpless to vindicate his position. How fruitless his faithfulness must have seemed to him as he lay in the dark, fetid air of Potiphar's dungeon. To use Joseph's own words, "I have done nothing that they should put me into this 'hole'." But his trust in God was never shaken by this great wrong done to him.

Potiphar, as Captain of the Guard, is considered by some Biblical scholars to have been Pharaoh's royal executioner. As such, he had total power of life and death in his hands. It is even claimed that the dungeon into which Joseph was put was on Potiphar's premises. If so, it occurs to me that for the criminal act of raping his wife, Potiphar should have quickly killed Joseph. In fact, I don't think Potiphar ever believed his wife, and rather than send an innocent and wholly trustworthy man to his death, he sends Joseph instead to the prison house. Potiphar's irresponsible act of throwing an innocent man into prison was an act of "saving face." Potiphar knew the intrinsic goodness of his faithful steward as compared with the deceit, guile, and impudence of his capricious Egyptian wife. Not for a moment did he believe her tale. But he had to save face for her too; so to the dungeon with Joseph. His decision to punish Joseph but spare his life bears close resemblance to a later decision of Pilate's, who, convinced that Christ had done no wrong, appeals to the Jewish mob, "I will therefore chastise him and release him" Luke 23:16.

In the prison house Joseph immediately put his talents to use, making himself invaluable to the keeper of the prison. It would seem that Joseph was at first cruelly treated in prison for Psalm 105:18 says, "Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron." It could not have been of long duration, however, for the keeper of the prison was undoubtedly previously acquainted with Joseph as manager of Potiphar's household. Soon the keeper of the prison came to admire Joseph for the same qualities for which Potiphar had promoted him, and Joseph was advanced to the responsible position of which Genesis 39:22 and 23 speaks.

His new responsibility as manager of the prison was an important one for it was in this prison house that the offenders from Pharaoh's court were detained. Yet the keeper came to rely fully on Joseph's integrity and trustworthiness so that Joseph directed and oversaw how everything in the prison was to be carried out and **all** the prisoners were committed to his faithful oversight. How wonderful are God's ways! Joseph had opportunity to become acquainted with Egyptian culture and court life during his confinement in prison. The imprisoned court magnates under his supervision must have talked freely to Joseph so that he learned much about politics, economics and trade, which in God's plan would be very useful to him in his future career as Prime Minister of all Egypt. Joseph is being fitted for Pharaoh's courts in the unlikely dungeon of Potiphar! God's ways are past finding out—only like Joseph, trust him in everything. How was Joseph to know that for the wisdom, tact, and discre-

tion necessary to bring the great nation of Egypt through a horrible crisis God was providing training in the dungeon? Even though Joseph enjoyed a certain amount of liberty in Potiphar's prison, the clank of the fetters reminded him daily that he was a prisoner still.

It would take another sovereign act of God to bring Joseph out of prison and into the second most important position in Egypt's land. And so we find Joseph interpreting the butler's dream. Again we are impressed with Joseph's faithful character. In his poignant plea to the butler to show kindness to him when he is restored to his position as Pharaoh's cup bearer, he makes no attempt to clear himself by implicating others. He does not accuse Potiphar's wife nor does he blame his brothers who sold him into Egypt, but says simply, "For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon" Genesis 40:15. Such a "covering of sins" pays big dividends for Joseph's brothers in the end, for it is debatable whether Pharaoh would have been favorably disposed towards Joseph's brethren had their earlier deeds of treachery to Joseph come to his knowledge.

Indeed, Abraham stands foremost on faith's pinnacles, but Joseph stands preeminent for unfaltering faithfulness, steadfast principles, and trustworthiness. His father Jacob's often unwise partiality towards him did not in the long run spoil him; the betrayal by his brothers did not embitter him nor cause him to lose heart; and Egypt's allurements did not lead him astray. His own heart being without guile, he saw it not in his brothers. Whether he was in charge of finances, the lives of other men, or courtly decorum, he undertook his duties with meticulous fidelity. In every new position in which he was placed, he put his trust in God, showing faithfulness first of all to Him and then fidelity to all men, so that profane men in a debauched nation were forced to acknowledge his integrity and reliability. In sore trial as well as high honor he was faithful.

In Scripture's detailed narrative of Joseph, we are impressed with his complete dependence upon and acknowledgement of God's sovereignty in all his affairs. When Potiphar's wife seduces him, he answers, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9. When the butler and the baker relate their dreams, Joseph replies, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" Genesis 40:8. When Joseph has opportunity to "toot his own horn" to Pharaoh, he humbly, but forthrightly declares, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" Genesis 41:16. His message to his aged father contains no words of self-commendation, but rather, "Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt" Genesis 45:9. Even in the naming of his sons he calls his ever faithful God to remembrance (Genesis 41:51, 52). And who can read with dry eyes his words: "I am Joseph your brother. . .be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life . . .and God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" Genesis 45:4-7. When father Joseph died and the brothers quaked with fear that **now** Joseph might retaliate, he assures them, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me;

but God meant it unto good. . . ." Genesis 50:20. But it is Joseph's dying words which place him forever in the annals of history (Hebrews 11): "God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence" Genesis 50:25.

Concerning Joseph, we can only echo Hebrews 11. "These all died in faith", **faithful**!

As Joseph's coat of many colors, once blood-stained and torn, was exchanged for a robe of fine linen, and his shackles of iron replaced with a chain of finely-wrought gold, so the faithful among us will be given the glorious apparel of Jesus Christ.

"Peter tells us how we should act toward those who wrong and persecute us. When you are treated badly, he says, you should do good. When you are reviled and cursed, you should bless. . .O Lord God, how rare such Christians are!"

-Martin Luther (on I Peter 3:9)

"In summer and in winter shall it be." Zech. 14:8

The streams of living water which flow from Jerusalem are not dried up by the parching heats of sultry midsummer, any more than they were frozen by the cold winds of blustering winter. Rejoice, O my soul, that thou art spared to testify of the faithfulness of the Lord. The seasons change and thou changest, but thy Lord abides evermore the same, and the streams of His love are as deep, as broad, and as full as ever.

Spurgeon

The Fruit of the Spirit
DEVELOPING FAITH

by Pastor Ron Van Overloop

Exactly what is this fruit of the Spirit. Once we understand what it is, we can consider how it is developed.

We all know that faith is frequently spoken of in the holy Scriptures. As such it is a knowing and a trusting; knowing God from His Word and a trusting confidence that He has given

to me for Jesus' sake all the blessings of salvation.

Sometimes the knowing is emphasized and at other times the trusting confidence is on the foreground. Here the latter is obviously the case because of the context. Coming in the list of the fruit of the Spirit where it does, tells us this. It is listed after longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness and it is just before meekness. These are Christian virtues, which describe the saint's relationship to his neighbor. Then, faith is a faithfulness; a loving trust and confidence. The emphasis is not on our faithfulness to God, but our faithfulness toward our neighbor. (Note well: faithfulness toward our neighbor is firmly grounded upon our faithfulness toward God. In turn, this faithfulness toward God cannot be separated from a knowing of God as He has revealed Himself in His Word.) Look at the word "faith" in this list of the various aspects of the fruit of the Spirit, and read it as "faithfulness".

What is this faithfulness?

It is being trustworthy and dependable. It is being reliable and loyal. It is honesty and dependability.

Faithfulness toward our neighbor is based upon our faithfulness to God. Faithfulness to God is the steady pursuit and search for God's will in the Scriptures. It is believing, holding God's Word to be true and His promises to be sure.

Faithfulness to our neighbor is trustworthiness and dependableness. It emphasizes that love does not forsake its object in time of difficulty, but remains constant and true, even in the hour of deepest need and in the greatest difficulty. It is a faith which believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and covers a multitude of sins.

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How is faithfulness developed?

It almost goes without saying that it is the fruit of the Spirit. (It is impossible for anyone to exhibit this fruit apart from the working of the Holy Spirit.) He applies to the elect of God the blessings of salvation as merited by Jesus Christ on the cross. As He works salvation within us, fruit is produced. This fruit includes faith or faithfulness.

How does the Holy Spirit produce this fruit.

First, He deposits the seed of faithfulness within the elected child of God. He does this in regeneration. Secondly, He causes this ability to be faithful to develop, which development is usually within the sphere of the Word and Gospel. They are the external means the Spirit uses to arouse these Christian virtues.

This development is in connection with the Word and Gospel because they show to us God's faithfulness. It is the knowledge of God's faithfulness to us which brings the consciousness of our responsibility to be faithful and which gives the ability to be faithful. As creatures, the Creator demands that we show fidelity and faithfulness toward Himself and toward our neighbor. Man's fall into sin and resultant depravity deprive man of the ability to begin to obey this admonition. This ability is restored in God's vessels of honor by the Lord Jesus Christ. He forgave all unfaithfulness and His righteousness earns the virtue of faithfulness. These chosen vessels can be faithful, but it is a constant struggle to be so, because of the remains of flesh present with us. What inspires the believer in Christ unto the exercising of this virtue is the knowledge of

God's abiding faithfulness.

Consider these passages which speak of God's faithfulness. "God is faithful" (I Cor. 1:9). "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations" (Duet. 7:9; 9:5). "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (Psalm 36:5; 89:1). "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (II Thess. 3:3). "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (II Tim. 2:13). Jesus is called "the faithful witness" and "Faithful and True" (Rev. 1:5; 19:11).

An example of those who are faithful to God are those "beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands" (Rev. 20:4). "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

The Scriptures are filled with examples of saints, who, under the most trying of circumstances and in the greatest of difficulties, believed that God would not forget them, but would faithfully remember, care for, and establish them. Their faithfulness to God was inspired by faith in His faithfulness to them. To these same saints is often attributed faithfulness to their neighbor. They could be faithful, even if it meant loss, because they were confident of God's faithful care of them. Knowing how God is faithful to us, we are moved by the Spirit to be faithful to our neighbor, even to those whom we deem to be undeserving (as undeserving as we are to God).

* * * * * * *

What role do we play in the development of this virtue of faithfulness?

We must place ourselves in the sphere of the means which the Holy Spirit usually uses to arouse and inspire the exercise of this virtue. That sphere is the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ.

God appointed the cities of refuge, but the manslayer had to flee to them or he would not be safe. If the manslayer (even if it was involuntary and he was later judged as not being worthy of death) would fail to flee to a city of refuge and was slain by the avenger of blood, then his blood was upon his own head. He was required to exert himself in order to benefit from the city of refuge.

So must we exert ourselves to increase in the knowledge of the beautiful and consistent faithfulness of God. A faithfulness which never wavers, even when we depart into sin. A faithfulness which is most highly manifested in the unspeakable gift of His Son.

This thought moves the true believer to a deep sense of gratitude; to the knowledge of the great debt of gratitude he owes to God. With the joy and praise for His faithful God upon his lips and in his life, the believer strives to be faithful to God and to his neighbor.

This thought also moves the true believer to prayer. For he is deeply conscious of his own inability to produce this virtue of faithfulness. He prays because God gives His Spirit and grace to those only, who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him, and are thankful for them.

From the Pastor's Study
JOSEPH, THE EXALTED LORD

by Rev. D. H. Kuiper

(The reader is encouraged to refer to Genesis 41:41-44 and Genesis 47:14-20)

Like a golden thread woven intricately through the entirety of Joseph's life is the beautiful working of Divine providence. To be sure, the life of every man reveals the unfolding of God's plan. We often fail to see that because rarely do we see the picture of life in its completeness. But the Lord has left us examples in Scripture by which He displays the truth that in and through all things He realizes His high purpose. The life of Joseph is a lucid and impressive illustration of this. It was the Lord's intention, eternally, to elevate Joseph above his brethren and to make him the exalted Lord of the entire world of that day! This had been revealed to Jeseph as a youth already, and without knowing the details he believed that God would bring it to pass.

Notice how the Holy Scriptures place the emphasis upon the directing, governing hand of God. "And the Lord was with Joseph and he was a prosperous man." (Gen. 39:2.) "The Lord blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph's sake." (Gen. 39:5) "The Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison; and the Lord was with him and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper." (Gen. 39:21) And after Joseph is second in command in Egypt, he explains to his brethren, "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." (Gen. 45:8) We simply have to view the prosperity of this young saint as the fruit of the power and grace of God in whom he trusted so stedfastly!

God gave to Joseph several spiritual virtues: a very submissive nature, a strong faith, enduring patience, and cheerful industry. Humanly speaking, what a different outcome this history might have had, if Joseph were an impatient skeptic, who was quick to revolt when confronted with opposition, and had to see with the natural eye before he would act. But that is exactly the wonder of God's working, don't you see? He not only determines the end from the beginning, but He also determines and supplies the **means** to that end!

If you read the passages cited at the beginning of this article, you could not but be impressed with the high position to which God elevated Joseph in the land of Egypt! He wore the king's ring, golden chain, and clothing; he rode in the second chariot and before him all men were exhorted to bow the knee; and Pharoah made it plain to him that without Joseph no man could lift up his hand or feet in all the land of Egypt! With that power and authority vested in him, Joseph subjected the entire land to the strictest monetary policy one could possibly imagine. After seven years of plenty had past and the seven years of famine had become a reality, Joseph gathered all the **money** in the land, then all the

cattle, then all the **land** became Pharoah's, next the **people** became the slaves of the king, and finally Joseph passed out **seed** for crops and of the increase exacted **twenty percent** for Pharoah! Bear in mind that Egypt was the greatest world power of that day, and Joseph with the power given him by Pharoah was the highest earthly ruler to be found anywhere. Admittedly Joseph ruled with a heavy hand in that high position. His administrative and financial policies have often been criticized. It must be admitted that Joseph ruled without laxity; for every bit of meal given, he required payment. In this way he spared the land from utter ruin. And he certainly ruled over the land of Egypt with a rod of iron! (See Psalm 2:9, which applies to Joseph as a type of Christ.)

We must notice, however, that Scripture includes another feature of Joseph's rule that reveals quite the opposite attitude and demeanor. To Egypt also came the brothers of Joseph, and after the young ruler had revealed himself to them, the aged Jacob and all that he had also came down to Egypt, settled in the land of Goshen, and became subject to Joseph! The family of Jacob represented the Church of that day; to them were given exceeding great and precious promises, and upon them God bestowed choice, covenant blessings. But because the famine also affected the promised land of Canaan, the Church came down to Egypt and became subject to the exalted ruler of the land, Joseph.

Over his brethren, the church, Joseph did not rule with a rod of iron, but graciously. He did not exact from them the last farthing, but he refused to allow them to pay for anything. We have already seen how they found their money in the mouths of their sacks. In Genesis 45 we read that Joseph instructed them that "They are not to regard their stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is theirs." And Pharoah says to Joseph, "The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell." Thus, they live in the best of the land and they make no payment of any kind. How different is the treatment of the sons of Jacob from the treatment the Egyptians themselves received.

So Joseph rules over both the church and the world! He whose way had been through the deep, whose life for the past twenty years had been filled with grief and suffering, is now honored and respected! He ran his race with patience, with faith he clung to his God, and when the day of reckoning comes, he is marvellously rewarded by his God! It is true that his faith receives another reward when he enters into his heavenly reward. In fact, the honor conferred upon him in Egypt is but a picture of what awaited him in heaven. But if the earthly exaltation of Joseph is great, what shall the heavenly be? Truly, God is good to them that put their trust in Him!

The Gospel of this history for the Church today is simply this; what God has done for Joseph He has promised, and **will do**, for every single one of His children. As God led Joseph from being an outcast in Canaan to the Lord of all in Egypt, He displays to us that He will raise up all those cast out by the world to make them lords over all who will reign forever and ever. "The meek shall inherit the earth." (Matt. 5:5) Just as surely as the proud shall be abased so surely shall the humble be

exalted in due time. What happened to the young saint Joseph so long ago shall happen to everyone who is united to Jesus Christ by faith. This may be difficult for us to believe, since we live in a world where wickedness is everywhere present, and where nothing seems able to stand before the onslaught of sin. And as the world develops in sin the church appears to be more and more helpless. But who are we to say that things are hopeless? When Joseph sat in Egypt's prison, did it ever seem possible that he would rule over his brethren? Yet the Lord brought that very thing to pass! The power of the Lord is never diminished, nor is His arm shortened, that He cannot exalt and save. Although we can only expect a cross in this world, yet faith is confident of ultimate and complete victory over all the forces of sin and evil. "Evil doers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:9-11)

At the present time we seem to be in bondage, we seem to be dispossessed, we seem to occupy a precarious, unattractive position. But the day of our perfect liberation is at hand, and in a little while we shall be raised up to reign from on high! Be patient until the day of our Lord! In that day we shall receive a position far greater than Joseph ever received in Egypt. He had great honor, but he lost it after seventy years through death. But not even death can rob us of the glory that is promised the Church of Jesus Christ; she shall reign with Him forever and ever!

The absolute certainty of this promise lies in the fact that it is **God's promise** and in the fact that Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, is even now in highest glory. All those that are one with Him shall surely follow Him into that reward!! Isaiah writes of the Savior: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Indeed, far more cruelly than Joseph, the Christ was hated and made to suffer. Because He was holy and we were corrupt, we affixed Him to the terrible cross. Yet Jesus opened not His mouth. Such patience!! Such waiting on the Lord! We can only marvel!

But notice the wisdom of God. As Joseph was sold into Egypt that God might preserve a seed alive unto Himself, so also Jesus was delivered to the cross with the very same purpose in mind! It was evil of Joseph's brothers, and it was evil of the Jews and Gentiles of Jesus' day; but God meant it for good! The deepest humiliation was necessary in order that Christ might reach the highest possible glory prepared for Him by the Father. (See Phil. 2:1-9)

It may not appear that Jesus reigns, according to the outward evidence of things. The kingdoms of the earth still rage. The world continues to show itself dead set against Christ, His righteousness, kingdom, and people. Maybe one is inclined to doubt that the anointed of God does, indeed, have universal supremacy. Then we turn to God's own Word which cannot lie, and which always penetrates to the heart of things. We find in Rev.

19:1, 4, 6, "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. . .And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." What believer of the Bible can ever doubt but that God is on His throne, ruling over all things through Jesus Christ, the worthy Lamb that was slain!

Jesus is Lord! He rules over the world of unbelief with a rod of iron, dashing them to pieces like a potter's vessel. The Lord laughs, the Lord regards it an amusing thing that the wicked imagine they can come against Christ with impunity or any success. But Christ also rules over His Church by His wonderful grace and by the indwelling of His Spirit. He makes the Church willing to stand in the midst of a hostile world as representatives of His cause. He gives grace to be faithful, to be pure. That grace is sufficient day by day so that the pilgrim believer knows that the day is at hand when Christ comes to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain, to settle all the accounts.

When the Lord comes, He will dispossess all the kingdoms of this world, and He will give freely to His people the new heavens and the new earth. There can be no doubt about that.

Christ has the victory. And since we are united to Him by faith, faith is the victory that overcomes the world. We understand that all things are ours, we are Christ's and Christ is God's. Be patient. Be obedient and holy. Be faithful. The reward is certain and the crown is sure.

"An elder should get all his people to feel a deep interest in their church and congregation, in the services, meetings, classes, mission work, etc. It is always an unhealthy sign in a church member not to care much for the church and congregation he belongs to. Let people avoid getting into a grudging, grumbling way about church matters, but rather take a hearty, kindly interest in them. Many things in this world, both civil and ecclesiastical, are not what they should be, and might be. But let us not be among the grumblers. . . . Like Paul in Acts 28:3, let us gather our bundle of sticks when other people are only crying out about the cold." -David Dickson

(Quoted in The Presbyterian Reformer, George Hutton, Ed.)

"The lower that a soul sitteth in the valley of meekness, the more streams of grace and love come to him. And if the soul be high in the hills of pride, the wind of the Fiend bloweth away from him all manner of goodness." -John Wycliffe

Truth Vs. Error
APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
8. Apostate Sodomites Suffering in Hell

by Rev. R. C. Harbach

"Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." —Jude 7.

Jude's three historical examples of apostasy and its punishment are from the church world, the angelic world and the heathen world. We render the text: "Now I intend to remind you. . .how Sodoma and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, in similar manner to these (fallen angels and destroyed Israelites, because of) having out-fornicated and went after flesh of a different kind, lies before (the eyes) an example of under-going vengeance of everlasting fire."

The people brought to the judgment of destruction were those of Sodom, Gomorrah and the cities round about them, including Admah and Zeboim (Deut. 29:23). These places were totally destroyed together with their inhabitants. Originally they were within the borders of the Canaanites (Gen. 10:19), a people notorious for their vileness.

The sin of these people is that of "giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh." In general, fornication may be said to be illicit sexual intercourse of an unmarried person with a person of the opposite sex, whether married or unmarried. But this sin had been indulged to an extreme in which these wretched people had out-fornicated the fornicators of the world, having gone awhoring after flesh of a different kind from that of the natural male-female carnal relationship. This is, men burned in their lust toward one another, men with men doing the unseemly; the women changing the natural use to that which is against nature (Rom. 1:26, 27). So this particular sin is sodomitish fornication.

The example of the judgment to be expected on sodomitical sins is expressed in this, that these cities and their sodomies lie before the eyes of the whole world as an illustration of all perverts undergoing the divine vengeance of everlasting fire. (Matt. 25:46). In Genesis 19 and in Jude's epistle, the whole world has a notable documentation of such instruction as to keep men within the bounds of God's law.

The judgment inflicted is the vengeance of everlasting fire. The sodomites not only had their cities burned up, but they were thrown down into hell, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Mk. 9:44). Hell is the place of everlasting punishment. God is there upholding

the sinner with one hand and punishing him with the other for ever and ever. If we think the pastoral prayer is long, the sermon long, how unbearable must hell be! Some nights when we cannot sleep seem long. But what of those "tormented night and day for ever and ever"? (Rev. 20:10). The pleasures of sin are short-term thrills, but the punishment in hell never ceases.

The degenerates exemplified here are condemned under penalty of death. "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination . . .If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them" (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). In Sodom, men of every age, old and young, were slaves to this lust; the young having been at it for some time, the old not past it, regardless of their years. The whole town, men in every quarter were involved, including the civil authorities. There are today sodomites on the police forces, in the armed forces, in the prisons (most notoriously), in the ministry, in the teaching profession, in the entertainment world. Many churches abandon preaching for drama and the dance by which the people are taught such horrifying corruptions as rape, abortion, nudity, prostitution, profanity, obscenity, homosexuality and lesbianism. The people in those cities of the Dead Sea oasis were the "Rock'n'Roll" set of the day. What were they like? The same as they are today. We ought to be aware of their language. At the "super" market, pick up at random a "rock'n'roll" record. That could have on the front of it a picture which blatantly advocates the sodomite way of life. One has a front-cover caption that reads, "Church of the Poison Mind," absolutely unacceptable to Christian value-judgments. What sort of words are expressed in current "Rock music"? Would you believe such topics as anarchy, bestiality, free-love, Marxism, revolution, homosexuality, sadism, masochism, necrophilia, Satanism and suicide? Check it out. Do our Protestant Reformed young people listen to such vileness? If they ought not to be taken off to jail for playing or listening to such wickedness, at least they ought to be taken out to the wood-shed!

Sodomy today: why does it exist world-wide in this "enlightened", scientific age? Partly because of the late "sex craze" fomented by unwarranted emphasis on and the playing up of sex as in popular television so full of pornography and sex perversion. Another great contributing factor is that the government, news media, public schools, courts and American society in general, are all in their flaccid thinking, non-judgmental and permissive. The word of man has been substituted for the Word of God. Consequently, the willfully wicked sodomite mentality of our whorish age goes hurtling steeper down the bottomless abyss of degeneration, disease and chaos under the inescapable wrath and judgment of God. It is all a mark of the end of the age. Scripture is clear on this point: II Tim. 3:1, 3, 13; II Pet. 2:6-8, 12, 18; Jude 7, 8, 10, 18.

Antichrist. "Then Jehovah rained brimstone and fire upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah" (Gen. 19:24). People everywhere increasingly see how fitting it is to refer to the wicked cities of the world by the names of these Canaanite cities. For world-wide Canaanitish sins increase in lurid lewdness. But these names may more appropriately apply to

the church of the antichrist, the synagogue of Satan. See Isa. 1:10 and Rev. 11:8. The true church in the latter passage is represented by the two witnesses, which are the two olive trees, the two lampstands, the ministers Antichrist removes from the churches, from the **Civitas Dei**. The church of antichrist is so great that it houses all the hierarchy of Romanism under its little antichrist, the Pope; all the apostate Protestant Modernism with its Unitarian-Universalism, religion of the lodges, the secret societies, ecclesiastical unionism (as in the one-world church of Bahaism), the old and the more recent cults, as the Hare Krishna, the Zen Buddhists, Scientology, the "Children of God," the Black Muslims and the gurus, avatars and mahatmas of East-Indian pantheistic mysticism. These form Antichrist's **Civitas Diaboli**. It is all Sodom and Egypt.

Infants innocent? "Since God declared that for but ten righteous in Sodom, He would have spared the whole city for their sake, may we not well suppose, if infants are perfectly innocent, that He would have spared the old world, in which there were many hundred thousand infants, and, in general, one in every family, whose perfect innocence pleaded for its preservation? Vast care is taken to save Noah and his family, that they might not be involved in that destruction. If the perfect sinlessness of infants had been a notion entertained among the people of God of old, in the ages next following the flood, handed down from Noah and his children, who well knew that vast multitudes of infants perished in the flood, is it likely that Eliphaz, who lived within a few generations of Shem and Noah, would have said to to this very time. "They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction. The sword without, and terror within shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also, with the man of gray hairs." Also the last destruction of Jerusalem, as far as Scripture is concerned, is to the point, being a fulfilment of Deut. 28:53-57, where parents ate their children in the siege, and the tender and delicate woman ate her new-born child. In executing His holy wrath on the actual and original sin of man, the Judge of all the earth does right. "Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man.) God forbid! For then how shall God judge the world?" (Rom. 3:5, 6). —Condensed from Jonathan Edwards' Works on Original Sin, (II, 378-381) and on the question, **Why Wouldn't God Spare Those Cities for the Sake of the Infant Children?**

Bunyan had portrayed Christian and Hopeful fearfully observing a wretched sinner being taken out of this life and hurried off to eternal judgment. Christian thought he knew the man, one Turn-Away, from the town of Apostasy. But his face was partly covered, partly turned away, like a thief taken into custody. Going past them a placard on his back bore the words in thick black letters, HYPOCRITE AND DAMNABLE APOSTATE. May we never be so branded, but be preserved by grace to the end!

Job, 'Whoever perished being innocent? And when were the righteous cut off?' (Job 4:7).

"When God executed vengeance on the ancient inhabitants of Canaan, not only did He not spare their cities and families for the sake of the infants therein, but often with particular care

repeated His express commands that their infants should not be spared, but should be utterly destroyed without any pity; while Rahab the harlot (far from innocence) was preserved, and all her friends for her sake. God executed His wrath on the Egyptians, slaying their first born; though the children of Israel, most of them wicked men, were wonderfully spared by the destroying angel, yet first born Egyptians were not spared. They not only were not rescued by the angel, and no miracle wrought to save them, but the angel destroyed them by his own immediate hand, and a miracle was wrought to kill them."

God commanded through Moses the destruction of the infants of the Midianites (Num. 31:17). Saul was commanded to destroy all the infants of the Amalekites (I Sam. 15:3), and, concerning the Edomites, a people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever, (Mal. 1:4), it is said, "Happy shall be he that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones" (Psm. 137:9). "And if any should suspect that such instances as those were peculiar to a more severe dispensation, under the Old Testament, let us consider a remarkable instance in the days of the glorious gospel of the grace of God, Luke 23:29, 'Behold the days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the womb that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck.' " The verses in Deut. 32:21-25 have special respect

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"But it seems somewhat inconsistent, when he says that the faithful, who exulted with joy, were at the same time sorrowful, for these are contrary feelings. But the faithful know by experience, how these things can exist together, much better than can be expressed in words. However, to explain the matter in a few words, we may say that the faithful are not logs of wood, nor have they so divested themselves of human feelings, but that they are affected with sorrow, fear danger, and feel poverty as an evil, and persecutions as hard and difficult to be borne. Hence they experience sorrow from evils; but it is so mitigated by faith, that they cease not at the same time to rejoice. Thus sorrow does not prevent their joy, but, on the contrary, gives place to it. Again, though joy overcomes sorrow, yet it does not put an end to it, for it does not divest us of humanity. And hence it appears what true patience is: its beginning, and, as it were its root, is the knowledge of God's blessings, especially of that gratuitous adoption with which he has favored us; for all who raise hither their minds, find it an easy thing calmly to bear all evils. For whence is it that our minds are pressed down with grief, except that we have no participation of spiritual things? But all they who regard their troubles as necessary trials for their salvation, not only rise above them, but also turn them to an occasion for joy."

Calvin, I Peter 1:6; p. 32

Will those who think that their lot in life is hard read this quote from Calvin again, please.

1986 YOUNG PEOPLES' CONVENTION

Theme:

"Being Reformed in 1986:
Heritage & Calling"

Text:

II Thessalonians 2:15

I In Truth - Rev. Kamps
II In Godliness - Rev. Gritters
III In Comfort - Rev. Slopsema

July 28 — August 1

Valparaiso University

• **SPECIAL NOTE:**
We are planning on something new this year!!
We are now having special activities and discussions for our older and resigned young people, so plan to attend!