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Responsibilities of Conception:
The Responsibility to Conceive

by Mrs. H. Brands

Think about it. When we send out a missionary, do we bid him farewell with the words, "Now be careful not to get too many converts. If you start a church, limit its membership. Have only a few families . . . ."?

We could, you know, with plausible-sounding arguments, have only a few members, and you can instruct them more fully in doctrine. There will be less disagreement, more unity. If the few members are sound in faith, heresy will be less likely to creep in . . .

Or, how about with already established churches? If other professing Christians profess to believe as we do and desire to join our churches, shouldn't we nonetheless limit acceptance of new members to a set number, say one or two new families per church per year?

Even the thought must evaporate when spoken. **God** gives faith and **God** converts the sinner: If **God** sends new members into our midst, either via missions or established churches, who are we to attempt to hinder God's work by limiting the number of new members?

And so, we wouldn't think or speak those words.

But how differently today we approach a family! Family planning, family **limiting**, is okay, all because of problems which may occur with a family. Have several children? But . . . the cost! But . . . the woman's health! But . . . the education! But . . . our emotional instability! But . . . But . . .

Oh yes, this is true amongst us! Of course it's true in our world, which is feministic and finds every conceivable rationale for self-centered living. But it's also true amongst us as Christians. Recently in a Bible class in our local Christian high school, the class was asked to name in writing how many children each student would like to have when he had a family someday. **All but one said they only wanted two children** . . . and that lone exception only wanted four!

Why is this? Why don't Christians want families anymore? Remembering that a century ago most Christians considered large families a blessing, why don't we want children today?

A very interesting—and in may ways worthwhile—book has entered the 1985 market, entitled THE WAY HOME by Mary Pride. The key thrust of this book is that the essence of femininity lies in motherhood and that the modern woman in destroying that love of motherhood is destroying the Biblical woman. She stressed that the Bible calls child-bearing a blessing and then addresses the question we have just asked, "Why don't Christian women want children anymore?" Her answer is that our world has made us **afraid** of having children and she names several fears we have.

#1 The fear of beggary. Each child will cost us $200,000 in eighteen years,

say the experts. One child consumes 40% of an average income, two take 60% of it. This means four children would take an **entire** income, right? Nothing left for the parents! We can't do it; children cost too much.

#2. Fear of bondage. Having children will tie us down too much, preventing self-development, limiting our other involvements, causing us to lose our freedom.

#3. Medical fears. We are warned of so many dangers with giving birth. We are told that multiple births result in poor health for the mother and for the children. Giving birth after age 30 results in birth defects and after age 35 results in dangers for the mother's health and life. On and on . . . .

#4. Fear of overpopulation . . . an unfounded myth.

#5. Fear of "rabbithood". Uncontrolled, most families would have twenty to thirty kids!

#6. Fear of persecution. Today's anti-family attitude results in hostile social attitudes if we have over two children. Besides, overt attempts are being made legally to prevent large families by penalizing those who have them. It's both an embarrassment and a danger to have many children.

Mrs. Pride then points out that the one fear absent in this list is the fear of God. But, in her words, "The Lord is the **only one** worth fearing. . . . Not snide neighbors. Not anti-baby feminists. And definitely not babies. . . ." (67)

Rather, we as Christians are called to **conceive children** and we as Christian women are called to be mothers in Zion. God gives us that calling as the way of **blessing** for us. We should always keep in mind His calling. Some passages of His Word that we should never forget are these:

Genesis 1:28. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." This is a Creation mandate and as such endures until the end of the world. But note well: God gives the command as a **blessing!**

Psalm 127. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."

Psalm 128. "Blessed is every one that fearth the LORD . . . thy children (shall be) like olive plants round about thy table . . . !

I Timothy 2:15. The woman "shall be saved in childbearing" (in obedience to God's calling for her life, is the idea).

I Timothy 5:14. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

Titus 2:4-5. "teach the young women to be (wise), to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

If a poll were taken in one of our schools, how would we come out? How many of our young people would **like** a large family? How many take God at His Word, trust Him to provide our needs, and call children a blessing? If **you** were asked how many children **you** wanted, how would **you** answer?

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Ho! What a host of objections promptly arise! What often amazes me is that I hear these objections from mature women in the church who ought to know better, who ought to be

instructed in godliness already in their youth. And this impresses on me the need for our **youth** to be ready with answers **before** they are in the situation and **before** their responses are only emotional. We must train our emotions by God's Word, too!

Some objections that always arise are these.

Objection 1. Then you are belittling women with no children?

Answer. Definitely not. Martha Bruinsma in the August-September 1985 BEACON LIGHTS had exactly the proper attitude of a barren mother, the **desire** for children to train for God yet a submissive spirit that accepted God's will in her life. God has a feminine role for every woman and where He withholds children He will also allow the submissive woman to channel her motherhood in another direction, such as teaching children or helping others in the church. But, to use an analogy of Mrs. Pride, it's quite different to have a tree which doesn't bear fruit than to go around pinching off the blossoms on a tree which would normally bear a good harvest!

Objection 2. Then a home with many children is more blessed than a home with few children?

Answer. God's blessing rests on **faith shown in obedience**, never on circumstances alone. Where God gives few or no children but obedient faith still sees the giving of children as a blessing, there God blesses the home. Where many children are present but esteemed a burden and nuisance, God's blessing is absent. God's blessing is not on numbers of children but on faithful obedience in our attitude towards them.

Objection 3. So, no birth control? Doesn't God give us a mind to use, too?

Answer. I trust—I HOPE—none among us would use abortion to get rid of an unwanted baby. But, in principle, beyond the fact that abortion is murder, how does birth control differ in its real principle? Also in birth control, aren't we saying that a child is unwanted? Also in birth control, aren't we rebelling against God's plan for the natural result of intercourse? The real issue is whether we are willing to trust God!

This is not to deny the **very rare** situation in which it is clear that having children will jeoparidze a woman's life. This is so rare that I have encountered it only once, possibly twice, in my forty years of life so far. That's a whole different issue.

Objection 4. What if I'm **not capable** of handling a large family? Emotionally, I can't take it! Or physically, I'm too weak. Or mentally, I'm slow and won't train them well . . ?

Answer. God gives us both our abilities and our responsibilities. Let Him determine also our capabilities.

Emotionally, are you weak? I've seen godly women with repeated emotional breakdowns whose children **all** matured to Christian leadership.

Physically weak? I am personally learning that God still provides often in mysterious ways and that these weaknesses actually are an aid in motivating our children to help more willingly.

Mentally weak? As long as we lead our children **to the Word** and instruct them daily and faithfully as well as God enables us, our children **will learn what counts, to love God!** A parent need not be a scholar but **must** obey God and God will then bless. Many leaders have arisen from uneducated homes.

Objection 5. But what if I just

don't want many children? Isn't this in the area of Christian liberty?

Answer. Yes. This is usually the real issue. The world says, "Be yourself and do your own thing." But God says, "Obey Me in love and be blessed." To **want** (or not want) anything contrary to God's Word is to **sin**. God's blessing rests only on obedience.

And, yes, the conception of children is an issue that lies in the area of Christian liberty. "Only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh . . . ." (Galatians 5:13). Christian liberty never implies disobedience to God but rather the new obedience that arises in Christ out of thankful hearts, because we are not through works earning salvation, but rather living the life implanted by Christ of salvation already earned by Him. Can we express our thankfulness through disobedience?

Let's humble ourselves before God. Let's acknowledge God as God, also in this area of the conception of children. Let's believe what He says that "Children are the heritage of the LORD and fruit of the womb is His reward." Let's view covenant children as a **blessing** and **love** them!

The Eye of Faith and Hope

by Rev. G. Lubbers

"He that planteth the ear shall he not hear? He that formed the eye shall He not see?" Psalm 94:9

Our prayer should daily be "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy word". (Ps. 119:18)

I assume that you have more than once considered with awe and holy wonderment what a masterful creation of God your physical eye is. It is not the least of the members of our bodies which God has made fearfully and wonderfully.

We ought to stop and reflect on the many ways in which we in our daily speech say different things about our eyes. Do we not speak of beautiful eyes of a Rachel in distinction from Leah who was not so attractive, whereas she was tender eyed and was not beautiful and well favored. (Gen. 29:16) We speak of appealing eyes, downcast eyes, uplifted eyes, tearful eyes, pleading eyes, mocking and reproachful eyes, searching eyes, hopeful eyes. Yes, our eyes are perhaps the most beautiful part of our face. When we die, we have breaking eyes. The last rays of the light of the sun have been then reflected in these eyes. They are then not merely dimmed by reason of old age, but they are like shattered mirrors which cannot be repaired.

And to think that the Lord who made the eye could and did make our eye because God is a seeing God. Yes, He that formed the eye shall He not see? It was really because of these all seeing and penetrating eyes of God into the very conscience of Adam and Eve which caused them to hide in the garden. We read of God's eyes as well as those of the glorified Christ that they are like "flames of fire" (Rev. 1:14; 2:18). God is too pure of eyes to behold evil and He cannot look on perverseness when evil men persecute the righteous (Hab. 1:13).

He that formed the eye, shall He not see? All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do: there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight (Heb. 4:13). For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ear is open to their cry. And God looks in his servants to find them faithful.

The Bible speaks of a good, single eye, and of an evil eye.

The good eye is also called the single eye by Jesus Himself, and this single eye is connected with a pure heart. Out of the heart are the issues of life. This good heart loves that which is pure and good and noble, and directs the eyes to that which is good. On the other hand, an evil eye is connected with an evil heart. That which comes forth from an evil eye defiles the whole man. We have but to think of the evil eye of "the woman", later called Eve, who being tempted by Satan, the Old Serpent, in her heart, looked upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus through the evil eye of lust the flood-gates of wickedness corrupted Adam and in him the entire human race (Rom. 5:12).

This brings us to the point of the sanctified use of our eyes.

Yes, this refers to our eyes in the life of true faith and of conversion.

Our eyes should ever be upon the Lord. The Lord's eyes should ever catch our eyes and bring us to attention. We are to be attentive to the Lord's ways—also with our eyes. Here it will no longer be true that the eye is not satisfied by seeing. The eyes of the ungodly unbelievers are not satisfied. Nothing that he sees satisfies his soul in which God has placed eternity. Man cannot rest save that he rests in God - also in his vision. It must be the everlasting **Visio Dei!** Apart from seeing God in all things man is caught up in the vanity of vanities. His eyes must then be satisfied with the nameless emptiness of life, and the deep void in his heart must be filled with the dregs of life. These dregs are the dregs of the cup of God's wrath upon all life. Not so it is with those whose eyes are lifted up to the LORD in earnest expectation.

Such saints live in the hope of one day seeing God.

They have received eyes to see, just as they have received ears to hear.

Now Satan, the world and our own flesh do not cease to assault us. They are our incessant and mortal enemies as long as we are in this flesh. And ever Satan would tempt us to sin. And we need daily and fervently to pray: lead me not into temptation. We need to be spiritually sensitive to distinguish that which is good from that which is evil and sinful. Paul does not say for nought in Phil. 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honorable**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are of **good report** (gracious); if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any **praise**, these things consider."

Consider this each moment of the day and of the night.

Then we say with Job "I have made covenant with mine eyes, how then should I look upon a virgin?" (Job 31:1). However, the saints all stumble and fall and then later to weep bitterly in heartfelt sorrow. O awful hour of temptation for David, when upon arising from his bed at eventide, and walking upon the roof of his house, he

saw a woman bathing, Bathsheba, a woman very beautiful to look upon. There he fell and a dagger was thrust through his heart. It was the law of sin in David's members, warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into subjection. (Rom. 7:22).

Tell me my youthful friend, yea also more elderly friend, have you made a covenant with your eyes!?

Do you, do I take seriously the Word of God in I John 2:15-17? You have meditated on the words "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him", and then you read on and pondered prayerfully the words "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the **lust of the eyes**, and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world"?

Lust of the eyes the Scriptures speak of. These are really identical with lust of the flesh. They are closely associated with the vainglory of our biological life. You like to buy a new car? Your car dealer, if he is a man of the "lust of the flesh", will try to allure you to buy the car with the association of scantily clad girls. The whole world of advertising is permeated with this lust of the eye. And they need an eye-catcher. They know what makes the lustful eye click! It is called the psychology of advertizing. It appeals to the evil eye of natural man, and to the evil eye of the flesh of God's people in which there dwells no good thing.

But this is not the bottom-line in the born again child of God, who is converted from sin, called from darkness into God's marvelous light. He has a delight in the law of God after the inward man. He has died unto sin, all sin. He hates sin and loves God. He hopes to one day see God face to face. And John tells us that **everyone** who has this hope to see God **purified** himself as God is pure. And this **purifying** is a life-long struggle. And it requires constant prayer for the gift of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ in our hearts.

Such is the spiritually sensitive Christian!

What do you read by way of magazines? Yesterday, while at the church watering newly planted bushes, my companion picked up a pornographic magazine. I have the reason of love to believe that this could not have been thrown under the trees by any member of our church, whether older or younger. It was promptly destroyed as being unfit for the single eye! Do we do that too in avoiding the evil theater, the filthy pictures whether in an outdoor theater, or on the pictures shown on the television. Do we feast our eyes on lustful magazines? Surely, these things do not belong to what the Bible calls: true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, etc, do they?

Shall He that formed the eye not see, and behold and try even our thoughts and the secrets within?

One day we do hope to see God face to face in the face of Jesus Christ. It is then that we will have our glorified bodies. And our eye shall be then as pure as the eyes of Jesus who was holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God.

Let us sing in sincerity of heart,

"When I in righteousness at last,
Thy glorious face shall see. To view the glories that abide, then, then I shall be satisfied."

Psalter No. 32.

Truth vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
8. Apostate Sodomites Suffeirng 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, lie before (the eyes) an example of undergoing 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. That 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 hell must 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 some 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, who have said to 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 for ever, (Mal. 1:4), it is said, "Happy shall he be 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 to this very time. "They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burn-

ing 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!

From the Pastor's Study
PULPIT AND PEW

As seen from the pulpit

by Rev. C. Hanko

Have you nevered wondered what goes on in the mind of the minister as he is in the pulpit, or even while he is preaching?

For one thing he has made a lot of preparation. Our professors in the seminary often told us that in preparing a sermon we must let the text speak to us. We should not approach a text with some preconceived notion and try to fit the text into what we want it to say. The text must speak, and we must listen. This involves a study of the original language, either the Hebrew or the Greek, exegesis of the text, meditation and prayer One must be in the state of mind that he can say: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." To use a rather homely figure, making a sermon is much like making homemade bread. The dough must be prepared and kneaded. The yeast must have time to work through the dough. Then the bread must be kneaded again, and possibly again, until it is finally ready for the oven. In making a sermon the text must become alive in one's soul. It must create zeal and enthusiasm. Only then is the minister ready to write out the sermon. This cannot be done at the last minute on Saturday. This involves the entire week of preparation, taking the text along to the sick and the shut-ins, to the catechism classes and society meetings. By Sunday the minister must be

bursting with eagerness to preach. He needs an hour or so to enter once more fully into his sermon and to be spiritually ready to meet the congregation. He needs the quiet opportunity to pray. Only then can he climb the pulpit and with strong conviction say: "Thus saith the Lord!"

What helps the minister in his preparation is a few quiet moments with the consistory and the prayer of one of the office bearers. This should indeed be a quiet time of preparation, also for the office bearers. What is also a great help is the fact that the congregation prays for him that utterance may be given to him, that he may open his mouth with boldness, to make known the mystery of the gospel. Eph. 6:19. It stirs the depths of his soul to join the congregation in singing: "With joy and gladness in my soul I hear the call to prayer!" And, "O pray that Zion may be blessed and have abundant peace, for all that love Thee in their hearts shall prosper and increase. What is also important is the receptivity of the audience, the quiet atmosphere, the zealous singing of the Psalters, the eager waiting for the sermon as expressed in the congregational prayer.

One congregation seems to be more receptive to the preaching than another, even as one individual is much more receptive than another. A minister soon recognizes those who slump down in their seats, take a relaxing position and doze or sleep through the sermon. He also soon spots those whose faces have a far away look, and knows that their minds are occupied elsewhere. Some faces can even express complete boredom. It is best that the preacher put those out of his mind.

There is a close contact between an attentive audience and a zealous minister. Sometimes the atmosphere can become so electrified, that the preacher feels that his audience is hanging onto each word he utters. A receptive audience is an inspiration to the bearer of God's Word.

That can even be true of individuals. Children can be taught to listen. I prefer this to allowing them to draw pictures or fuss with a plaything. Some children have learned to be so attentive that, not only the minister, but also those sitting around them are impressed by their attitude. In fact, I know of children who at an early age can follow the minister as he proceeds from one point of his sermon to the next. I grant you that this takes some effort on the part of the parents, but it is not impossible. Making sermon reports are undoubtedly helpful in teaching a child to listen, but the child must also learn to take part in the service spiritually, as himself involved in the Word. I recall an incident where a rhetorical question was asked, "Is that true?", and a small child responded in all seriousness with a loud "No-o-o".

One intensely interested person in the audience can be an inspiration to the minister. An elderly man comes to mind who always sat close to the front. He could not resist showing a smile of perfect contentment as he drank in the message. At times he was so impressed that he would turn around to his son on one side of the church, or to his son-in-law on the other side with a nod of the head, as if he wanted to say, "Now, did you get that?"

I well recall an elderly mother in Israel, whose face almost radiated with joy as she sat and worshipped among the saints. During the sermon her eyes never left the minister. She sat in rapt

attention throughout the sermon. In fact, at times she would move forward, as if she could not drink in the message fast enough, so that she often sat at the very edge of her seat. You can well realize that a minister can readily forget the rest of his audience and preach to one such eager soul.

Preparation for the Sunday service is of utmost importance. You and I both realize that if a person is out late on Saturday night, sleeps as long as possible on Sunday morning, dresses amid a great turmoil, and then rushes off to church to arrive just as the consistory enters the auditorium, that person is hardly prepared for worship. One young man that I heard about had arrived in church just as the service started. Afterward he boasted that he had stayed in bed until twenty five minutes before church time, had dressed, had gotten into his car, and had still made it on time. He wondered whether maybe he could still cut another five minutes off from his time of preparation. Even an unhappy atmosphere in the home on Sunday morning, or an indifferent attitude toward the minister, or a lack of desire to go to church can deprive one of a blessing before the service has even begun.

One time I was in a farm home where the chores were finished at an early hour, breakfast was served and enjoyed with still ample time to go to church. As soon as all the family was dressed the father called us all into the living room. There we had a half hour of devotions. The father remined the family of the Lord's Day that would take up their attention that morning, read a passage of Scripture that suited the occasion, and led in prayer. Would that we could have more of that!

Not merely for our spiritual edification do we go to church, but a church service is something very special, the like of which can not be found anywhere upon the whole earth. A church service is a **worship** service. There God's people meet with their God!

> To Thee, O Lord, I lift my eyes, O Thou enthroned above the skies; As servants watch their master's hand, or maidens by their mistress stand, So to the Lord our eyes we raise, Until His mercy He displays. To Thee, O Lord, I lift my eyes, O Thou enthroned above the skies! Ps. No. 351

God speaks through the benedictions, through the Scriptures and through the preaching. He speaks even powerfully as He applies His Word by His Spirit through the faith of the saints. His people respond with the doxology, both at the beginning and end of the service, but also in song and prayer. This response is also evident whenever the Apostolic Creed is read or recited. Our blessing does not depend on the preacher, who is but the channel through whom Christ speaks, but our blessing depends on Christ, Who alone can speak to us the words of eternal life!

May we appreciate our worship services while we still have them. In many places God's people meet in very small groups, often in homes, listening to a tape or to a sermon that is read to them. This already is a foreboding that the day is not far off when the church doors will be nailed shut, when songs arising from the communion of saints will no longer be heard, when our worship will be in secret; who knows under what circumstances?

Fruit of the Spirit:
"Learn of Me; for I am meek. . . ."

by Don Doezema

Just how important is meekness in the estimation of God? The Apostle Peter, who wrote by the inspiration of the Spirit, declared it to be a grace of the highest order. He says of the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit" that it is "in the sight of God of **great price**" (I Pet. 3:4). And the Apostle Paul puts equal emphasis on this particular fruit of the Spirit. In the epistle to the Romans he advises that, with respect to honor, we should be "preferring one another" (12:10), that is, we should take more pleasure in **giving** than in **receiving** it. To the Ephesians he stressed that the walk which is worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called is characterized by "all lowliness and meekness" (4:1, 2). He admonished the Philippians that they should, in lowliness of mind, "esteem other better than themselves" (2:3). The Colossians, further, were encouraged by Paul to "put on" meekness (3:12); Timothy to "follow" it (6:11); and Titus to "show" it (3:2). Any doubt that might yet persist regarding the surpassing beauty of this Christian attribute should be set to rest by the prominence which is given to it by Christ Himself. "Learn of me," He says, "for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

The truth of the matter is that meekness was exemplified **par excellence** in the Lord Jesus. For Christ, Who was in the very form of God, "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). And it's interesting to note that Paul prefaces the above description of Christ's humility with this admonition to the church: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). Thus the greatest display of meekness that the world has ever seen and will ever see is proposed for our imitation. How serious therefore should be our endeavor to possess that grace! For, as one writer put it, "shall the glorious Savior be humble, and the miserable sinner be proud?"

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Meekness is indeed an essential badge of Christ's disciples. And we do well to note that it's an attribute which is not common to man. Nor does it, to the saints of God, just "come naturally." It's something that must be **cultivated.** And the very frequency with which the Spirit in the Scriptures exhorts the church to meekness suggests that, in the school of Christ, it is one of the hardest lessons to be learned. It is that because it is in our nature to be proud. Our hope for a

better country does not always burn as brightly as it should, and we find ourselves, to our shame, often ambitious for **personal distinctions** in this one. We are not really content to be last, or, for that matter, even **second**. Sometimes we are willing, perhaps even eager, actually to **serve others** — howbeit, if we know our own deceitful hearts (which in itself is no small accomplishment — see Jer. 17:9), we'll see a whole lot of **self-seeking** even in **that**.

Sometimes too we find ourselves, because of our own sinful pride, unable to endure the littlest reproach. That's hardly meekness. And we should be aware of the fact that it's playing right into the hands of the devil. As George Bethune writes concerning this fruit of the Spirit, "Well doth the Devil know, that, if he can distort the Christian's face with envy and anger and revenge; if he can pervert the Christian's tongue to revilings and stormy rebuke; if he can arm him for quarrel and not for love; if he can substitute for the meekness of the Lamb of God, the venom of his own serpent malice, he has destroyed the attraction of Christianity, seduced his enemy to his own ground, and made the victory complete . . . . When Christians quarrel, whoever seems to win, the Devil is the only gainer." In order, therefore, that we not give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, we **must heed** the admonition of Peter that we **clothe ourselves with humility** (I Pet. 5:5). We must learn to live a life of service — service to Christ because He is our King, and service to others because meekness requires that we put their best interests before our own.

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Meekness, as defined by Webster, is a mildness of temper, a patience under injuries. It is, in other words, a **disposition of mind**, and therefore a **passive** virtue. Yet, it cannot remain merely passive. It must come to manifestation in one's **life**. And a very common occasion for it to do that, as has already been suggested, is in the way of serving others. Jesus is, of course, our greatest Teacher in that regard. His whole life (to say nothing of His **death**) was one of service to His people. There was however one incident which He used, in a very pointed way, to demonstrate to the disciples that they must be ready to render to the brother whatever service is needful, no matter how lowly it might seem.

The incident to which we refer occurred in the upper room, in the night of Jesus' betrayal; but, for a better understanding of the setting, perhaps we ought first to look briefly at an event which took place much earlier in the course of Jesus' walk with the Twelve. On their way to Capernaum one day the disciples, out of Jesus' hearing, "disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest" (Mark 9:33, 34). Jesus however, perceiving the very thoughts of their hearts (Luke 9:46, 47), asked them on their arrival in Capernaum, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" Their response to that question is quite revealing. Mark tells us that they **didn't dare say a word** (9:34). The fact is that they were **embarrassed**. They were embarrassed because they knew full well the spirit which led to that disputation along the way. Each one of them wanted for himself a place of special distinction in the kingdom. Instead of humility in their relationships with each other there had been

envy and pride (which constitute, incidentally, the root cause of much of the dissension among fellow saints). In the place of harmony, therefore, there had been war among the disciples. And, confronted suddenly by the Master, they were **ashamed of themselves**. Had they been asked by one of the Twelve, "What were you arguing about?" they would not have hesitated at all to explain in some detail what was the subject of their dispute, and to provide what would seem to them to be ample justification for their individual concerns. But they had walked with Jesus long enough to know that **He** would give place, no not for a moment, to the kind of strife in which they had been engaged. They realized at once that nothing they could say could possibly put their dissension in a favorable light, when the One with Whom they had to do was **Jesus**. How, after all, could there be **self-seeking** in the presence of Him Who had taken upon Himself the form of a **servant**? So, the disciples shamefacedly said nothing.

But Jesus proceeded to give them the instruction they needed anyway. And, not contenting Himself with mere **words**, He chose at that time to give them an **illustration**, in order that His teaching might be the more deeply impressed in their minds. He called to Him a young child and set him in the middle of the group of disciples. Can you imagine how the child felt about that? Alone in this company of adults he must have been quite ill at ease, feeling very small indeed. No desire for preeminence among them would he have, nor even a thought about his own comparative greatness. In fact, in the simplicity of childhood he would be quite ignorant of degrees of honor. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child," Jesus said, "the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." That is, what characterizes this child, from a natural point of view, should be true of you **spiritually**. He was thus exhorting His disciples to **humility** — which would have been the end of the strife which had so recently arisen among them.

Did the disciples learn? No. Some time later the mother of James and John even made so bold as to request (with their knowledge surely) a place for each of her two sons in His kingdom, one at His right hand and the other at His left. And then, finally, sad commentary though it may be on the spiritual receptivity of the disciples, ambition once more reared its ugly head in the upper room. We are not told the occasion for it, only that "there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted greatest" (Luke 22:24). A supposition which seems to me to be as good as any other is that it arose in connection with the matter of the washing of feet. Jesus and the disciples had arrived at the upper room in the afternoon or early evening, after a walk of some five miles over the Mount of Olives. Their feet, covered only with sandals, would naturally be quite dirty after that long walk over the dry, dusty road to Jerusalem. Ordinarily the host, or a servant, would wash the feet of the guests. But apparently neither was present — though the owner of the house must have made provision for washing, for, according to John's account, water, a basin, and towels were at hand (13:4, 5). The washing of the feet was therefore left to the disciples themselves. But not one of them made a move to perform such a

menial task for the rest. Each simply took his place at the table, willing to dispense with the foot-washing altogether rather than be the one to take the part of a servant.

At any rate, the old feelings of personal ambition and of rivalry among the disciples were once again aroused, and Jesus found it necessary once more to instruct them concerning greatness in the kingdom of which Christ was King. "The Kings of the Gentiles," He said, "exercise lordship over them" (Luke 22:25). What counts for greatness among men of the world, in other words, is **power**. "But," Jesus continued, "**ye** shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the **younger**; and he that is chief, as he that doth **serve**." Distinction in **Christ's** kingdom is to be found, not in one's putting himself **above** others, but rather in his willingness to **serve** his brethren. One who is chief, who is in a position of leadership, ought to lead as one whose joy is in humbly serving those whom he leads. In that way only will he be truly great.

Though the sequence of events is not entirely clear here, it may have been at this point that Jesus indicated that **He** was ready to wash their feet. The task which the disciples had considered to be beneath their dignity, Jesus did not consider to be beneath **His**. So He rose from the table, took a towel, girded Himself, poured water, and went to work.

To Peter, it seemed totally incongruous that Christ, the **Master**, should wash the feet of him who was but a servant. When Jesus came to him with the basin of water and the towel therefore, Peter resisted. In disbelief he asked, "Lord, dost **thou** wash **my** feet?" In answer, Jesus merely pointed out to him that his protest came out of ignorance of what Jesus was doing, and He assured Peter that eventually he would understand completely.

On completion of the task Jesus returned to His place at the table, and then asked the disciples, "Know ye what I have done to you?" Apparently Jesus did not wait for a reply to that question, for the next recorded words were also His. We do not, therefore, know what the disciples were thinking. But we can take for granted that they had some understanding of the fact that there was in it a lesson for them, a lesson in humility, and an implied rebuke of their own self-seeking. So they must have been uneasy and embarrassed during the whole affair. Very likely Peter's objection was the only speech that broke the somber silence in that room while Jesus was busy washing their dirty feet. The Lord's point could not have been lost on them. And now Jesus drives that point home: "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

Nevertheless, we ought not to think that the disciples, with that explanation from Jesus, understood fully what Jesus had "done to them." Recall what Jesus said to Peter: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Did He mean by that, this: "You don't understand right now; but in just a few minutes, after I'm finished, I'll explain it all to your satisfaction"? Did His "I have given you an example" then put an end to all questions in the minds of the disciples concerning what Jesus did here? That

that could not have been the case should be clear from the rest of the exchange between Peter and Jesus, before Peter agreed to submit to the washing. You will remember that, unwilling to content himself with a promise of future enlightenment, Peter insisted most emphatically, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus' reply was, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Now, if Jesus were doing nothing more than "acting out" a lesson in humility, He could not have made that kind of connection between the washing of Peter's feet on the one hand, and Peter's **salvation** on the other. But Jesus was not at all over-stating the case. The truth is that the foot washing was, first of all, a symbolic act. Jesus poured water into a basin in order that He might, as a servant, wash the dirt from the disciples' feet. Before another 24 hours were past, He would serve them in a far greater way when, by pouring out His life's blood on the cross, He would cleanse them from their **sins**. The washing with water thus anticipated a cleansing of a deeper sort, for it looked to the suffering and death of Christ. And Peter's response had been, "Never!" It was the some old Peter who on another occasion, when Jesus spoke of His death at the hand of the Jews, had vowed, "This shall not be unto thee." If Peter had had **his** way, Jesus would neither have washed his feet (the sign), nor died on the cross (the thing signified). It's no wonder that Jesus replied, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." To refuse the sign would have been, in effect, to refuse that which was signified.

The point is, at any rate, that there was more to the foot washing than meets the eye. That it was an example of humility was clear on the face of it. Not so evident is this matter of its being also symbolic. But it must be emphasized that to add this dimension to the foot washing does not at all **detract** from its force as an example. On the contrary, it **increases** that force. That's true because the event of which the washing of the disciples' feet was a symbol would constitute the supreme sacrifice of Jesus for His people. As far as service to others is concerned, the cross would make the foot washing pale by comparison. What Jesus did to His disciples in the upper room would therefore be to them and to us, **just because of what it would later bring to mind**, a powerful example of humble service to the brethren. For, in washing their feet with water, and in cleansing them later from sin by His blood, Jesus put the needs of others **first** — no matter what the cost to **Him**!

Not until Pentecost did the disciples fully appreciate what Jesus had done to them. But already there in the upper room, when Jesus explained that He had just given them an example, and that they should do as He had done, they understood that He was not prescribing a mere mechanical repetition of the washing of other people's feet. They knew, as do we, that He was admonishing His followers in every age to be ready to render to the brother whatever service is needed, no matter how lowly it may seem. "If any disciple of Jesus," writes Lenski, "should ever think himself too great to stoop to menial tasks in serving his fellow-disciples, he can do so only by thinking himself greater than Jesus, his Lord, for this Lord had just stooped so low." Shall the glorious Savior be humble, and the miserable sinner proud?

Fruit of the Spirit:
MEEKNESS

by Mary Beth Lubbers

"Behold, they King cometh unto thee, meek. . ." Matthew 21:5

There is a certain truth in the theory of Thomas Carlyle, "The history of this world is the biography of its great men." Certainly it is true that the great leaders of this world have left their mark on history's lessons. Equally true is that great eras in history are closely associated with the great leaders of that era. Alexander the Great (the glorious days of Macedonia), Julius Caesar (the mighty Roman Empire), Napoleon Bonaparte (France's day in the sun), even Adolph Hitler (Germany's ignominious rise to power).

What is the quality(ies) which is required for leadership? What brings an Alexander the Great, an Adolph Hitler, or a Ronald Reagan from virtual obscurity to the highest positions of leadership in the world? Historians say that Napoleon could greet thousands of soldiers by name and that the American politician, James Farley (1888 - 1976), could call over 50,000 people by their first names. Is the necessary quality for leadership the ability to relate in a personal, intimate way with the masses? Today probably more than ever before this is a desirable quality for leadership—at least it is one important way to become a leader.

Undoubtedly, the qualities most sought after and expected in a world leader are that he is dynamic, forceful, charismatic, diplomatic. A man with a golden tongue is high on the list, his rhetoric such that he is able either to appease or to excite the masses; and good looks don't hurt a potential leader either. Promises of the good life—plenty of "food and fun"— have always lured the people to follow a Pied Piper.

When it comes right down to it, modern day man's expectations for its leaders has not changed essentially from that of Israel's of old. Why did Israel's heart swell in hope at the sight of Saul? His bearing was kingly; "from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." And then later, "Saul has slain his thousands." "He has clothed us in scarlet and put ornaments of gold upon our apparel." In today's language, "He is strong; he has brought us the good life."

All of these are qualities which **men** look for in a leader. Are these also the important traits which God looks for in a leader? We would do well to remember that Saul was never God's choice for Israel's leader. Nor were Jesse's older sons, handsome and debonair though they were. Even Samuel was fooled by outward appearance. It seems that God, however, reserves to Himself a requirement for leadership that man has rarely, if ever, considered. God knows the vanity, the

futility, in **outward** indications of leadership potential. As always, God looks past—and through—the outer shell of a man and His eye penetrates deep within the recesses of a man's heart. And what does He want to find there which makes a man suitable for leadership? He is looking for **one** outstanding virtue for His leaders, be it in the world or in the church. His leaders must be meek! Meek, you say? Who would ever want a meek leader? In man's opinion meekness has never been a necessary ingredient for leadership; in God's judgment it is paramount. Scan the Scriptures from Genesis through Revelation and you will find that every leader that God ever chose was first and foremost meek. If Saul had one qualification going for him at the outset of his kingship it was that he was lowliminded. Would today that more leaders were "hiding among the baggage", being begged and coerced into the position of leadership.

When Saul became king, the adage held true, "If you wish to know what a man is, place him in authority." Saul's very soul became warped through it. "It is an observation no less just than common that there is no stronger test of a man's real character than power and authority (leadership, MBL), exciting as they do every passion, and discovering every latent vice." Saul could not hold up under these aroused passions; his latent vices soon rose to the surface.

In leadership there is the inherent vice, "Take heed lest thou become a Caesar indeed; lest the purple stain thy soul." In fact, it is **only** a leader who is meek who can withstand the intoxication of power and authority—whose soul will be untainted by the purple.

We often equate (wrongly) meekness with "mousiness." And in a world of "Stand up for your rights" and "I'll show you who is first around here" the quality of meekness is oft times strained. Meekness makes a man "all things to all men." Meekness is enduring injury with patience, without resentment. Meekness is largeness of spirit, denial of self, and willingly subjugating oneself to God and the neighbor. Meekness is an attitude of the heart which makes one willing to subordinate all one's own rights, real or assumed, to the service of peace and unity. Dr. Thomas Goodwin (puritan preacher) says, "Meekness must spring up out of one's heart, as that heart is more and more softened, and tamed, and humbled, and sweetened by the grace of God and by the indwelling Spirit of Christ."

To be meek is to be as submissive as Abraham, as self-effacing as Moses, as penitent as David, all to God's glory, for Jesus' sake, for the advance of the Gospel, and the welfare of the neighbor. Out of the many possible examples of Scripture's leaders (the judges, the prophets, the apostles), it is upon these three leaders that we will focus our attention as those who evidenced the fruit of the Spirit, meekness.

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Abraham was a leader chosen by God whose entire life was characterized by the virtue meekness. Although already in Ur he seems to have been a man of import, he willingly packs up all his possessions at God's behest to go to a strange land about which he knew nothing. It was because Abraham exercised meekness towards God that he was able to maintain peace and unity amongst the herdmen by showing

a spirit of meekness toward his nephew Lot. The pious patriarch took no account that **he** and he alone had been given the promises of God and the whole land for his inheritance, but rather, he "condescended to Lot's equal although he could not be compared in **age**, **dignity**, or **office**" (Luther, **Commentary on Genesis**, p. 238).

How meekly he stands on those wind-swept plains—the title to those lands all his, clear and free—speaking softly and smoothly to avoid the confrontation which is smoldering right on the surface. Hear him as he says to Lot in honeyed tones, "We are brethren, let there be no strife between us" (Genesis 13:8). In this incident we see Abraham keeping Christ's injunction in Matthew 20:27 and 28, "And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. . . ."

But Abraham's supreme example of a meek and quiet spirit came near the end of his life when, after waiting nearly one hundred years for the promised son, God commands him to sacrifice his son, his only son, Isaac. See, then, this great Old Testament leader (put to the ultimate test of bearing injury patiently for God's sake) walk meekly up Mt. Moriah, lay his beloved son on the altar, and with no forthcoming explanation from god, grasp the hilt of his knife to obey God unquestioningly and plunge it deeply into his son.

In Abraham God chose a leader/-friend who was meek towards Him and towards his fellow man.

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No Biblical example of a meek leader would be complete without Moses. For it is of Moses that we read a phrase which is found of no one else in all of Scripture: "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). It is a tribute to this Old Testament leader that the saying is common yet today, "He is as meek as Moses."

And again, it was because Moses was first of all submissive towards God, voluntarily leaving the gilded courts of Egypt to spend forty long years in the wilderness of Midian as a lowly sheep-tender, that he is able to evidence that same spirit towards God's people. With what meekness he leads the complaining children of Israel all the way to the Promised Land. What meekness is his when his own brother and sister try to pull him down from the exalted position in which God has placed him. For Moses, this was the final blow to any pride or self-exalting to which he might have been inclined —his own family humbling him by its envy and ill-will. This family dispute, coupled with his wife Zipporah's earlier stand-off over the issue of the circumcision of his sons, had done much to humble and make meek the heart of this man, Moses.

And yet, as with all the Christian virtues, the most meek of men has only a small beginning of this Godly virtue as is shown in the narrative of Moses when, on the very borders of Canaan, Moses, as fiery and quick-tempered as when he had slain the Egyptian taskmaster, struck the rock and called God's people rebels. How beautifully Alexander Whyte gives verse to this incident in the life of Moses:

Moses, the patriot fierce, became
The meekest man on earth,

To show us how love's quick'ning flame
Can give our souls new birth.

Moses, the man of meekest heart,
Lost Canaan by self-will,
To show where grace has done its part,
How sin defiles us still.

Thou, who hast taught me in Thy fear
Yet seest me frail at best,
O grant me loss with Moses here,
To gain his future rest.

In Moses, God chose a leader/-friend who was meek towards Him and towards his fellow man.

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It was while David was yet a youth that God looked deeply into his boyish heart and, liking what He saw, chose David to be king over all Israel. It was of this ruddy young man that Scripture says, "A man after God's own heart" (I Samuel 13:14). Without question, God saw much sin in that heart, sin of the grossest sort (adultery and murder!), for David was guilty of the worst of all sins beyond any other sinner in the whole Bible. But there He also beheld repentance, tears in the night, real sorrow over sin. He saw subjection to Him. He saw a leader brave, fearless, and loyal, but also meek and humble. And so, Samuel must go to the unlikely sheepfolds of Bethlehem, to a lowly farmer's home, to procure Israel's greatest king.

Even though David's brothers taunted him and accused him falsely when he was sent by his father Jesse to Saul's battle camp, there was no pride in his heroic slaying of Goliath, but rather, "The Lord will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. . .so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (I Samuel 17). How God loved the humility, the meekness, of the young stripling from Bethlehem. In David He saw the meekness of His own dear Son.

For many years after his anointing, David had to wait patiently, at great cost to his own reputation, for the crown to be placed upon his head. During those years Saul pursued him relentlessly. In retaliation, David had had more than one opportunity to take Saul's life and thus to place the royal diadem upon his own head. In meekness he waited for **God** to crown him just as **He** had anointed him so many years before. Indeed, David's self-restraint was the only thing that prevented civil war in the land of Israel. On one occasion, David did draw his sword but, to the consternation of his men, he only cut off the skirt of Saul's garment. To the end of his days, David rued that he had even dared to take a piece of Saul's robe for, after all, in David's own words, "Saul was the Lord's anointed."

To behold David's most Christ-like example of meekness we must see him and his band of mighty men as they are walking wearily past the top of a hill. His son Absalom has risen against him and his friend Ahithophel has betrayed him. A man named Shimei of the house of Saul comes out cursing David like a wild man and throwing stones and dirt at him. David's men, hands already on their swords, are eager to do in this "dead dog." But David, walking the way of sorrow, detains his men. Willingly, he endures the insults, the slights, the injuries, and meekly he says, "Let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. . .It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (II Samuel 16).

Whether David was on the hillside tending his father's sheep or performing his duties in Saul's court, whether he was in the wilderness fleeing for his life or wielding the sceptre from his throne, and especially in the sanctuary, David was meek towards God and towards the neighbor. Who of us finds it easy to prostrate himself before God, putting away every excuse, crying from the depths of his soul, "I am the man!?" it is with David's Psalmist pen that we are able to most clearly see the meek, lowly, penitent spirit of Israel's greatest of kings. "I acknowledge my sin." "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" "I waited patiently for the Lord." "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart thou wilt not despise."

In David God chose a leader/friend who was meek towards Him and towards his fellow man.

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Of David a voice from heaven said, Thou art a man after mine own heart, and it is that same voice which thundered centuries later. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Who is so meek a leader as Jesus Christ?

We sing of Christ in Psalter number 243:

A mighty leader, true and brave,
Ordained, exalted, strong to save.

And well we should. But listen to what Jesus says of Himself:

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

As one authority so well put it: "So utterly did the Son of Man renounce his own words, and works, and will, that we know conparatively little of Him. All was from the Father and to the Father")**Paul**, F.B. Meyer, p. 40).

"Come, learn of me for I am meek." See Him now as He relinquishes Heaven's courts for a lowly manger. See the One Who framed the starry skies and suspended the planets in their orbits hammering nails to help his father Joseph make a living. See how meekly this King sits on the foal of an ass. See Him stoop to wash His disciples feet. See Him now, when smitten, turn the other cheek. See Him reviled and mocked, answering not a word. Hear how submissively He prays, "Not my will, but Thine be done." See how meekly He bends His brow to receive a crown of thorns. With what divine meekness He pleads for us, His murderers, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

Would you be an imitator of Christ, a leader such as He? Then, "Come learn of me. . .I am meek."

And since no one else can always be with us, wholly enter into our sorrows, fully understand and comfort us with infinite love, therefore is the Holy Spirit the Comforter. He abides with us forever, enters the deep places of every soul, listens to every throb of the heart, is able to relieve us of all our cares, takes all our troubles upon Himself, and by His tender and divinely loving words and sweet communion raises us out of our comfortless condition.

A. Kuyper

Fruit of the Spirit:
DEVELOPING MEEKNESS

by Rev. Ron Van Overloop

If we are to assume our calling to develop the fruit of the Spirit called "meekness", then it is necessary to know its proper place and motive in the life of the believer. Jesus gives us the way in which this development will take place: "take My yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

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Grace and government. Did you ever think about it that way? That God's grace is always followed by His government. When Jesus becomes our Savior, He also becomes our Lord! In freeing from the bonds of sin, He binds us to Himself. He gives liberty to the captives, and then shows them their obligatory servitude to Him. Grace is always followed by government!

The slavery to sin is difficult to the extreme, the heaviest of burdens. The yoke of servitude to God is light and easily borne.

The yoke of servitude to God and to Jesus as our Lord is submission. That is the simplest way to describe it. Obedience to God's laws and submission to the afflictions He wisely determines to send upon us.

But, we cry, how can such a yoke ever be said to be easy? A burden is a burden, and it cannot be said to be light. Obedience to any law is always arduous for rebels. Afflictions are always sore, so how can submission under afflictions be easy? It is burdensome to be obedient and submissive.

It is, unless you have the right motive and the strength to be and to do so.

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Only in Jesus is there Rest. He is the Rest-Giver. His is the only voice of rest in this rest-less world.

Although one might think that everyone would turn to Him for rest, His rest is not wanted by all. Many reject Him.

But all who seek Him and His rest, find it.

Man fell out of peace and rest with God; he fell into the hopeless unrest of the devil (Isaiah 57:20, 21). With a perverted will, a corrupt heart and a darkened mind man is guilty. Under God's wrath he pines and dies. His load of guilt is daily increased. He is so chained to corruption that he cannot break free.

The worst is, that with his corrupt heart and dark mind, man does not correctly identify the cause of his grievous load. Man is weary, but not of sin. He is weary of unrest, war, sickness, and sorrow (all of which are the wages of sin). Man toils to improve his condition, to find happiness, and to make a better world. He refuses to see that his burden is sin. He denies that his unrest is that of being forsaken by God. Speaking peace man makes war. Boasting of good, he hates the righteousness of God.

The result is that the natural man refuses to come to Christ, thus

aggravating his guilt and increasing his misery. In rejecting Christ he proves that he is blind and dead.

But the Lord Jesus speaks, "Come!" And Lazarus comes forth.

When His "Come" is accompanied by His Spirit, He gives eyes to see, ears to hear, and minds to know. With these new faculties, Jesus gives the desire to be delivered and the will to come to Jesus.

Then whosoever wills may come and does come to Jesus. And they find rest and peace for their souls.

Such is the grace of God in Jesus. He condescends to deliver the undeserving from the consequences of their sins.

The fact that some find rest and peace, while others live and die in wretching misery does not have its source in man. The one does not deserve the rest more than the other. The other does not deserve the misery more than the one. This distinction cannot be attributed to man; it can only be ascribed to God's mercy and grace.

The recipients of this mercy and grace never cease to marvel that they were chosen. They are humbled - deeply so. They are MEEK. Looking at themselves, they are amazed that they were delivered from the wretchedness of unrest and are the unending recipients of God's grace and rest.

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The grace of God is always accompanied by His government. Jesus is Savior AND Lord. Jesus does lay a yoke and a burden upon His followers. The taking up of His burden is not additional to, but implicit in our coming to Christ.

The yoke is Christ's Word and commands. It is following His example, bearing His suffering, and doing His will.

But the Master sweetly says that the yoke He places upon us is easy and light. The Lord, Who bought us with His precious blood, assures us that, whatever burden there is connected with Him, it is easy and light.

Some never find Christ's yoke to be easy. They are the lovers of pleasure more than the lovers of God. Those already burdened with the guilt of sin cannot bear His easy burden, for they cannot serve two masters. The neck of self-will must be bent low to receive Jesus' yoke, and this they refuse to do.

But those who are perfectly rested and resting in Jesus can take His yoke. In the strength derived from the Rest, they can give the Lord six days of work.

They who find the yoke of Jesus to be easy and light have TAKEN it upon themselves. One cannot prove its easiness by intellectually evaluating it, but only by taking it. Religion is burdensome to those who know nothing of it. But those who trust in and love the Lord taste and see that the Master is good.

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But we cannot take the yoke of Christ, except we learn something. There is a very important lesson to be learned first. This learning is not only with the mind, but is especially learned with the heart. It must be spiritually discerned.

The lesson? It is to know Christ. We must learn what He is. We must learn what is the spiritual quality of His heart in His relationship to God. What will we find He is? And what is the spiritual quality of His relationship to God? He is meek and lowly.

We will shake off the yoke unless

we learn the meekness of Christ and meekness in Christ.

Meekness is our spirit's acceptance of God's dealings with us as good. This is true of the commands He gives and the afflictions He sends. Meekness is not resisting, but rejoicing. It is the determination to do His will, out of the love of God for ceaseless flow of Rest, for which we are so undeserving.

The more we know the humility of the manger and of the cross, the better fit we will be to be yoke-bearers.

Consider the humility of God becoming man, and that in a manger.

One glance of Him besmeared with spit and blood is sufficient to make us ashamed of murmuring.

See Him bearing God's wrath for the sake of His love for us, and become disgusted with refusing to deny ourselves for His dear sake.

When Christ's cross is fresh in the Church's memory, then she bears martyrdom for Him with joy.

Have you ever spent time considering how Jesus could so meekly bear the spite of men and the wrath of God?

And He called His own yoke easy and His own burden to be light. If we can see why, we will help ourselves to see our yokes as easy and our burdens as light.

His yoke of man's hatred was easy for him because of His love of us. His burden of God's wrath was light because of His joy in doing God's will. For the glory reserved for Him, His yoke was easy for Him.

The yoke He places upon us of denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Him is easy. It is especially easy when we compare it to the yoke of selfishness, the yoke of greediness, the yoke of unbelief.

The burden which Christ's grace has put upon us is not easy if we are rebellious against it. It is hard to bear if we do not do His will. The yoke made by our self-will is heavy. The hardness is in the sin that rebels against Christ. Meekness, complete yielding to Christ, makes the yoke easy.

Remember that it is not His yoke, if we are burdened with forbidden cares. For His yoke is that we be free from cares, casting them all upon Him. Our cares are not Christ's yoke, but are of our own making. Christ's yoke is being careful for nothing, and that is light.

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As Christ meekly took His yoke, let us meekly take the one which the out-pouring of His grace gently places upon us. Learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly.

Love makes us willing to do or suffer anything for the one we love. Love for God in Christ motivates us to do or suffer anything for His dear sake. Any yoke that we must bear is nothing when compared to the yoke our sins and guilt placed upon Him. And He bore it meekly and successfully.

We can also learn of Him, that His grievous burden was bearable when He considered the glory that would follow. Let us consider what will become of our yoke at last. Not only will heaven be brighter because of the darkness now, but every sliver of our yoke is changed into that much glory in our crowns of life (II Corinthians 4:17).

Learn of Him! Learn and bear!

Learn to be meek! And find the burden light!

The more we learn of Him and His meekness and lowliness of heart, the more the Spirit-fruit of meekness will develop in us and in our life.

THY WILL

"Thy will, not mine be done,"
These words my Savior said.
And shall I dare to shun
The path that He has led?
Thy will. How hard to say,
By one whose life so long
Has led in selfish paths alway
So stubborn and so wrong.

Thy will. Oh, victory so sweet
Is mine when now I cry.
"Thy will is mine," a joy complete!
No more need I to sigh.
Thy will. That which was hard,
Is now my joy and bliss.
Oh, may my will no more retard
Such work of grace as this.

—Alda K. Hansen