BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

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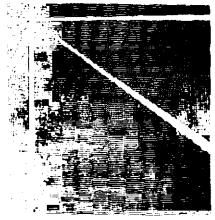
THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: TEMPERANCE



BEACON LIGHTS

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EDITOR'S NOTES

by David Harbach

Our staff of writers has seen two changes recently. The News Editor, Paula Faber, has resigned. No doubt her teaching responsibilities at Heritage School keep her plenty busy, which makes it difficult to continue writing on a regular basis. We thank Paula for her writing efforts over the year and pray that God will continue to bless her teaching. If you have been reading the September 15 Standard Bearer magazine you would have noticed that Ben Wigger, who has written faithfully in our Critique rubric for many years, has taken on the News From Our Churches. We know the S.B. is receiving an excellent writer, one that we will miss in the B.L. We pray that God will bless Ben in his new writing responsibilities.

Nancy Van Baren, who was already on our staff will now take over the position of News Editor. I hope our churches take note of this so that they send their bulletins to Nancy. In this issue is Nancy's first installment, which she gave me way back in September, and which shows she is very enthusiastic about her work.

This issue is also full of last articles. Ben Wigger finishes with his article "One More Year," which seems at first to be a year late, or maybe Ben has changed his mind about leaving the staff. Thanks Ben for your faithful writing. Also last are the articles on the Fruit of the Spirit by Don Doezema, Marybeth Lubbers and Rev. Van Overloop. This has been a very well written series of articles and full of instruction and meaning about developing the F.O.S. in our lives. Rev. Haak will finish the series, D.V. in the January issue.

In the next issue look for the interesting article ANTICHRISTMAS by Candidate Chuck Terpstra and the first of a new series of articles from last year's Church History class of Covenant High School.

MY TIMES ARE IN THY HANDS

"TEACH ME, IN WHATSOEVER STATE
I AM, TO BE CONTENT.
COULD I PRESUME TO STIPULATE
HOW THIS POOR LIFE BE SPENT?
"MY LORD, MY YEARS ARE THINE, TO USE
AS SEEMETH BEST TO THEE.
I KNOW WHATEVER THOU DOST CHOOSE
WILL BE THE BEST FOR ME."

-Martha Snell Nicholson

Editorial
LETTER TO MY GRANDCHILDREN

by John M. Faber

Dear Grandchildren:
In my last letter to you last July I mentioned that we cannot imagine the boyhood of Jesus. I have been thinking about that again and have tried to learn more about it. There is a scarcity of details in the Bible of our Savior's childhood; just a few remarks here and there throughout the Scriptures. This letter will be about that humanity of Jesus. We believe that Jesus was God-man; that is, He had two natures. God came down to this earth to take upon Himself a human nature. Human in all respects, but sinless. There is a special reason why I want you to understand that He was truly human, just like you are. In the last part of my letter I will show you what I mean.

First then, He was born of an earthly mother like each of you. The only, and big difference is that each of you have an earthly father. Jesus had a divine, heavenly Father. His Father was the Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. But because of His earthly mother, from which He received His human nature, He was truly human. He was a boy just like your brothers and every other boy you know; grew up to be a young man like every other young man you know; became a grown-up man like your Dad and every other man you have ever seen.

Let's look at some of those details found in the Bible. The day before Christmas Joseph and Mary came to Bethlemen to attend the census-taking required by the government. The city was filled with the crowds who had come for that event and all the hotels were filled up. Mary needed a quiet place to have her baby which was to be born soon. Joseph finally found such quiet retreat away from the noisy crowd. It was a cattle stall in which was a manger he could fill with hay to make a soft bed. There in that quiet place - it may have been a cave where the sacrificial animals were kept - Mary "brought forth her first-born son" as the Bible so simply states.

We wonder if Joseph got some help from some friendly neighbor woman. We do not know. That cattle stall had no hot and cold water faucets, no warm water with which to bathe the newborn. The Bible states "she wrapped him in swaddling clothes". We aren't told, but I imagine that Mary had prepared those clothes ahead of time and had brought them with her. And, "she laid him in the manger" is all we really know about that greatest of all events in all history.

The next event is full of details: flocks, herds, and singing. All about, and above the cattle stall were gathered an un-countable number of angels! They were specially chosen angels whose privilege it was to announce and celebrate that special event. And to do it with choir music! I am sure we have never heard such

beautiful singing in all our lives. Sopranos, altos, tenors and basses in perfect harmony, and in perfect pitch. Of course we would expect angelic singing to be perfect, for all God's work is perfect. The message of that song was unique - a once-in-a-lifetime message. You boys and girls know all about it, your Sunday School teachers taught you to join them, every Christmas when you take part in the program singing, "It came upon a midnight clear. . . ."

The next seven days are hidden from us. But on the eighth day another detail is revealed to us. Joseph, according to the law, had to present the baby to the priest to receive the rite of circumcision. At that time He was to be officially named. The priest asked Joseph what name He should have, and Joseph did not hesitate a moment to give his answer. He said, "call his name, Jesus." I wonder if that priest thought that was quite a high-and-mighty name to give that ordinary baby. After all, that priest did not understand the whole thing. This baby looked like any other baby that came for the eighth day circumcision and naming. That is the point I want to notice with you, for He was like any other baby boy. Remember, He was truly human.

After that sacred rite had been performed Joseph and Mary went home. Where? We don't know for sure, but we do know that they made their home in Nazareth. On their slow trip to Nazareth they talked together about all the strange and wonderful things that happened back there in the town of Bethlehem. That conversation reminded them of the Prophet which had said that this little chap would have many names like Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. That was one of the most important prophesies in their scriptures. That promise had kept the true Israel expecting a Messiah. But looking at that babe in arms His parents could not see or understand it at all. But?? It **was** true because the angel said so!

There was still another detail from His boyhood we must not forget. That was the visit of the three wise men "from the east". We know practically nothing about those men, but we do know that they believed the promise of the coming King better than did the Israelites. In their far away land they had seen a special star in the sky, and it was such a special star! It did not belong there with the rest of the stars with which they were familiar. The study of that star caused them to believe that the promised king had been born. So they harnessed their camels, loaded them with the provisions of the way, and with precious gifts for that king. To show their admiration for that newborn prince and to show their worship for Him they gave gifts of great worth: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Cannot you imagine the surprise and wonderment in the minds of Joseph and Mary? Surely the babe did not understand it, but neither did the parents fully grasp the truth involved. Even with the special revelation Mary had from the lips of the angel, it is said "she pondered those things in her heart." All that mystery of their famous babe had to be learned step by step. That visit, plus those of Simeon and Anna were all necessary that Mary might know that her baby in our human nature was also divine. Remember what I am stressing in this letter? The Person of the Son of God was living on

this earth in His human nature. He was truly man.

So He was raised in Nazareth. He learned to creep, to walk on hands and feet, and to walk upright, be it at first a bit wobbly, just like your little brother or sister, or the child next door. I can imagine Him creeping about on the floor of the carpenter workshop of the man He called father.

The Bible does not tell of His schooling, but we can learn from Jewish historians who have lifted the mystery of school life among the Israelites at that time. In good weather the classes were held outdoors, the teacher and children seated in a semicircle facing one another. In cold or rainy weather it was held inside, of course, but in the same arrangement. It was compulsory to start school at age six when they would learn the alphabet. Have you ever seen the Hebrew alphabet with its horizontal and vertical lines? Whew! After learning to read they would study the Book of Leviticus with all its laws. The historian says it this way, "The teacher should impart to them the precious knowledge of the law with constant adaptations to their capacity, with unwearied patience, intense earnestness, strictness tempered with kindness, but, above all with the highest object of their training in view." That description fits the work of your Christian school teachers to a "T", doesn't it?

The text book used through the 10th year of age was their Bible only. The study began with the Book of Exodus: laws, laws, laws and still more laws. The school hours were fixed with shortened sessions during the summer time. We also know that Jesus was a good student and apt pupil, for at one feast day visit to the temple we find Him, "listening and questioning" the Scribes. He was so very interested in the Scriptures which pointed to the coming Messiah. It was that time that His parents worried about His absence in the caravan, and went back to find Him so engaged. They were so surprised to find Him talking to the seminary professors of that day. Can you imagine (any twelve year old among you) going to our Synod meeting asking questions of the ministers and elders gathered there?

We are not told about Jesus' behavior or speech as a lad but we do know what He did **not** say and what He did **not** do. He did not talk back to His parents, He did not use bad language, He did not display anger at His playmates (unless they used vile talk). Oh, we can make a long list of things that you do or say from which you instinctively know Jesus refrained, don't you?

Taking a deeper look into His humanness, we have but to study His ministry, He hungered, He thirsted, He became tired and needed sleep. To all appearances He looked exactly like all the men in His audience. But what a difference in personality! It was the Person of the Son of God which said, "I" whenever He corrected the Scribes and Pharisees, saying, "you say such and such, but I say this." Many of them recognized that "he spoke with authority". And He suffered much from His countrymen and from the other children of Joseph and Mary. They could not see His divinity in His appearance. The Bible stresses His humanity in many ways, but especially in recording His bodily suffering, especially in the last week of His life. When His disciples left Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, His being

captured by hateful men who handled Him quite roughly, His mock trial, His being slapped in the face, His being whipped until His back was bleeding, His extreme tiredness so that He could not carry His cross up the hill, His pain suffered when the cruel nails were pounded through His hands and feet, His hanging on the cross, His whole weight on those fresh wounds, His extreme thirst and accompanying fever and death! After considering all those accounts of suffering, is their any more doubt that He was "truly man"?

Now I am ready to tell you the object of this letter. After you die and are buried (we all will) and rise again at the last day, your body shall rise as a glorified human body. Just like our Savior's body, just exactly. Then our risen Lord will be our Elder Brother. Brother? Can you imagine that? Of course you cannot. It is true nevertheless. In that body we cannot suffer pain. In that body we cannot get tired. In that body we shall live and reign with Christ over all things. Over the creatures which shall inhabit that new earth with us. There will be no night there for we will not need a night's rest. In fact, we will need an **eternal** day in order to learn all about that New Earth - its flowers, its grass, the trees, the animals which then will not eat one another, the lion and lamb lying down together!

And most wonderful of all, we will be able to see Jesus, because we will have glorified eyes that are able to see a glorified Savior. Now I know that you boys and girls do not often think about such things, but you can be sure your grandparents, your ministers and elders do. That's why we pray, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Love, Gramps

WILL OUR READERS RESPOND?

To our valued readers:

We are changing our format a little. This change not only includes you, but **depends** upon you. We are soliciting your notes and letters which we are going to print. Please take pen in hand and tell us your reaction, feeling, observation concerning Beacon Lights articles or current events in and around the church today.

We feel the Beacon Lights will be a better magazine for it. We may edit the letters for length and will try to publish all received. Only the city and state will be listed after your letter, no names will be printed unless you request.

Please sign and mail your rèsponse to:

Your Response
c/o Bernie Kamps
6035 Barry Street
Hudsonville, MI 49426

This is your chance to air some view or vent some steam. Won't you write today?

Thank you,
Bernie Kamps

Critique

ONE MORE YEAR

by Ben Wigger

Suppose, just a few minutes, that I were to learn positively that this next year was going to be my last. Three hundred and sixty five days are all that I have left; then my life would suddenly be brought to an end. How do you think that this fact would affect the way I live the last days of my life? Or put yourself in that same place, what would you do with only one more year to live? Or of more importance perhaps is, how would that last year differ from the way the un-godly world would spend it? Would there be that much of a difference? Would you say all through that last year, "To God be the glory," or, "Let's eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die"?

It seems to me that one of the first things I would want to do is come up with a plan on how to make the best use of the time left. I would want no wasted days. With only one year left my whole sense of values would take a drastic change. Things which I formerly ignored or considered of little or no importance would suddenly take on a new urgency. And things which seemed to be so important just a few days before would lose all sense of value. With the hope of a long life gone, certain responsibilities would be forced upon me. I could ignore them no longer.

In the first place, as a Christian, I would want to reaffirm my salvation. It seems to me that I would stop being a nominal Christian. I would stop hoping vaguely that somehow things would turn out all right. I would not rest until there was complete assurance in my heart that my sins were forgiven and that Jesus Christ was my Lord and Saviour. I would not want to half-guess my salvation with death only a year away.

I also believe that during that last year I would draw closer to God than ever before and give myself totally to Him. The reading of His Word and my prayer life would take up much more meaning and time than ever before. I would want this last year to be the most God-blessed one of my life.

Once the central question of my salvation was answered, my thoughts would turn to those I would leave behind. I would do all that I possibly could to see that the needs of my family were taken care of after my death.

This would include both their material and spiritual needs. And one of my priorities would be to get them all involved in church life as never before. And I would find peace in knowing that the church would be there ready to supply all their needs on this earth.

There would be no time for fighting or arguing with family or friends either. Their salvation would be of the utmost importance to me. And I

would pray that when my last year was over I could go to glory with the assurance that my family members had all acknowledged God as their Lord and Saviour.

I could also imagine conversations that lasted long into the night. There would be no reason to keep my hopes and fears a secret from others. I could be completely honest with them and they in turn could do the same with me.

I would want this last year to count as much as possible for God. And I think each one of us would stand amazed at just how much glory and grace God could put into each of our lives.

One of my favorite stories in the Old Testament has always been the account of the life of Samson. And God did just that with him. Samson rose to such heights of blessing. He was able to accomplish more in one last act of sacrifice than he had done during his whole life previously.

If I had but one year to live, I would not get caught up in trivial differences between the people I cared about. I would want to surround myself with family and friends. The term **the communion of the saints** would take on a whole new and exciting meaning for me. And I certainly could not afford to spend any time in gossip or lies about others.

And finally, I would want to get caught up on my thanksgiving and praise. I would be in church twice every Sunday.

I would repent of my ingratitude and recall the many, many blessings I have taken so much for granted.

I would thank God for the many friends I have. I would be the first to admit that there have been a few times when they have mistreated me; but for the most part people have treated me with far more kindness and consideration than I have deserved. And I would try to express this to them in the year I had left.

One can only speculate on just what each of us would do if we were placed in just this situation, just one year to live. All of the points mentioned above would seem to me to be at least a beginning of what we as Christians would want to do. You could add much more to the list. But we do not know just how long we have left on this earth before God calls us home. Whether we have a year or a day, or more only God knows. And since what would be right for that last year could also be right for our whole life, even if it's many many years, then the conclusion ought to be plain.

From our point of view we must live each day that God gives us as if it may be our last. Remember Moses who prayed "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:12 Moses prayed that God would help him make the best use of the days, months, and the years he had left. If Moses had a need to pray such a prayer, how much more shouldn't we find that same need. We all should live in just such a way so that when God does call us home, we can go with no regrets of things that we wished we had done.

The strictest churches have been the most pious, laborious, and useful churches. And the strictest age of any particular church has almost always been its best age.
Charles Hodge

From The Pastor's Study

What Is Your Soul Worth?

by Rev. C. Hanko

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." I Pet. 1:18, 19.

What is the value of a human soul?

We read of Joseph's brothers, that they estimated the value of Joseph at twenty pieces of silver, about eight ounces.

We also read of Judas and the Sanhedrin that they bargained together about Jesus and settled on the price of thirty pieces of silver.

What is your **soul** worth?

Jesus says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Matthew 16:26)

Here is a man, for example, whose worth is estimated as "the whole world". This man has, so to speak, a monopoly on all the gold and silver mines, all the oil fields, all the stocks and bonds, all the riches of the whole world. He is inconceivably rich, so that he has money to burn.

As if that means nothing, he is exalted in power and fame, so that his name is on every lip, engraven on every monument, blazoned in every hall of fame, to be remembered as long as this world lasts.

He lives in ease and luxury, has all that his heart desires. He can do absolutely anything and everything that appeals to him. He revels in an abundant life. He gloats: This is living!

Yet when all that is laid in a balance overagainst his soul, does all that outweigh the soul in value?

Would all that amply repay you for your soul?

What price tag do you place on your soul?

We recall that Jesus was once offered all **that**, even all the kingdoms of the world. He was offered the power and authority of a universal king, the praise and worship of all men, the abundant riches that will one day be claimed by the Man of Sin, the Antichrist.

He turned it down! He flatly refused to accept this proposition!

He turned it down because there was a hitch to it. Satan had promised Him the whole world, on one condition, that He would acknowledge that Satan was the rightful owner of the universe, that Satan was God. Jesus' love for God and His devotion to Him would never allow Him to make that kind of a concession!

Jesus answered the devil, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written,

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (Matthew 4:10)

Jesus estimated the value of His soul to be too great to sacrifice it to the devil!

What comes to mind at this moment is the parable of the rich man. (Luke 12:16-21)

We read that, "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater: and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee, then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?"

He had been a good farmer. He had worked hard. He had attained for himself all that his heart desired. He had enough and plenty for the future. His future was secure for years to come!

But he had failed to reckon with God. Those were God's fields, God's crops, God's barns. God even had claim to his soul, for God required of him: Love Me above all!

He was a fool, who estimated the worth of his soul in dollars and cents! He was rich in material things, but he was poverty stricken, empty, naked as on this same night he stood before God, the Judge of heaven and earth!

One can so readily place the wrong value on his soul!

We go back in our thoughts to our Lord, who rejected Satan's offer in love to God.

He chose the way of suffering that would end in the shameful, painful, accursed death of the cross. Even at the moment when He turned against Satan He saw looming up before Him the cross plainer than ever before.

Why did He? Only because from the depths of His soul He maintained: I come to do Thy will, O God!

And that will was? To bear the wrath of God against the sins of His people, to atone for their sins, and to redeem them from the bondage of sin and death and make them heirs of eternal life! He loved His own, even enough to die for them!

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:6-11)

Soon another school year will begin. A number of teen-agers and young people will be going to high school, or to college, or possibly to a university. You are confronted with the choice of subjects for the coming year; confronted with the goal that you set before you!

In our affluent times the opportunity offers itself to strive for some prominent position, which can include prestige, success, even making good money. That confronts you with the question of priorities, values! Even with the question: what is your soul worth to you?

Are you planning your future with God? Are you asking yourself how you can best serve God with the gifts and talents He has entrusted to you?

True, for some of you that may involve a tremendous self-surrender! It may mean that you see your classmates, or former classmates, striving for ambitious goals that could bring them prestige, luxuries, and all that one's heart can desire, as far as earthly gain is concerned.

You may even be offered scholarships or opportunities that are very attractive, even alluring for the flesh.

You find yourself confronted with the question: What price tag do I put on my soul?

Moses once faced that question. (Hebrews 11:24-26)

He had the opportunity to be "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." That included all the luxuries, the prestige and honor that is associated with royalty. He might possibly have been considered as heir to the throne of Egypt. It certainly included all the "pleasures and treasures" that Egypt could offer.

But he was born a Hebrew and had been instructed in the promises that God had given to Abraham and his seed after him; promises that included not only the land of Canaan, but the heavenly Canaan that flows with milk and honey to the glory of God eternally.

Moses placed them both in the balance, the pleasures and treasures of Egypt on the one side of the balance, the promises of God attained through faith in the coming Savior on the other side. The former could readily be attained: accept the gods of Egypt, put his trust in them, and retain his princely power and pleasure! The latter would mean forsaking Egypt and casting his lot with his family and people, the Hebrew slaves! Which meant most to him?!

We read that he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

That was Moses'faith venture! The reproach that Christ bore, and the reproach that all those bear who take up their cross after Him, meant more to Moses than all the success that Egypt could offer him!

To him it was a matter of values, of priorities! And with that the ultimate gain - eternal life with Christ in glory!

What value do you attach to your soul?

Is your soul so valuable in the sight of God, that He spared not His only begotten Son, but gave Him as the only possible ransom for you? Are you redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish or spot?

There are those also within the scope of the church, who attach very little value to their souls. They pass judgment on themselves, judging themselves unworthy of eternal life. (Acts 13:46)

To the sincere believer Scripture says: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (I Cor. 6:19, 20)

The question is very personal for each of us: How can I best serve God with the gifts and talents He has entrusted to me?

* *

The Fruit of the Spirit
"He that striveth. . .is temperate"

Don Doezema

We have come at last to temperance, the last of nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit as that fruit is outlined by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5. The word "temperance" in the original (Greek), we are told, means literally "inner strength." It refers here to the strength of **character** which enables one to exercise control over his desires and passions. This temperance is therefore the equivalent of self-control. One who is temperate shows first of all a kind of moderation in the gratification of his appetites, and in the curbing of sinful desires. But there's also a more positive side of temperance: the disciplining of oneself to walk in the way of sanctification. Self-control, in other words, includes both saying **no** to what we should not do, and **yes** to what we should do.

Will we be able, for this fruit of the Spirit, to look again to the example of Christ's life to show us the way? The exercise of self-control is necessary for **us** because we must be at war with the sinful desires of our hearts. For **us**, temptations from without find a ready ally in the desires within. But with **Jesus**, that was not the case. No sinful thought ever passed through His mind, and no sinful desire ever found a place in His heart. Is it perhaps true, then, that doing the will of the Father was something that came effortlessly for Christ, the sinless One? Was He unaffected by the temptations of the devil?

Satan tried repeatedly, you will remember, to lure Jesus into taking the first step in the way of rebellion against the way of suffering. Why submit to hunger pangs, the devil argued, when you have it in your power to make bread from stones? Why, later on, submit to arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, when you have it in your power to call twelve legions of angels to deliver you? Why remain on the cross, when you have it in your power to come down? Take your choice, the devil was suggesting. Is it going to be the way of suffering and humiliation. . .or will you use the power which you possess as the Son of God, to avoid that suffering, and gain your ends the easy way?

The question then is this: did those constitute **real temptations** for our Lord? Was there a **real struggle** taking place there in the desert? Or, was it rather the case that, as the Son of God Who never did sin nor could sin, He remained unaffected by these assaults of the devil, and the only effort involved was that required for the selection of appropriate passages of Scripture to use in His response? It's emphatically true of course that Christ **could not**, though He possessed a weakened human nature, **yield** to the temptation to sin. But we must maintain this, that the temptations were no less real for the fact that the outcome was assured from the beginning. For, just as surely as Jesus' body could suffer hunger and thirst and

pain, so surely could His soul shrink from the thought of the anguish which He would have to endure. We need only think of Gethsemane ("If it be possible let this cup pass from me"). The Spirit of Christ knew exactly whereof He spoke when He declared through the inspired writer to the Hebrews that Christ "himself hath **suffered** being tempted" (2:18). The truth is that the temptations of the devil could represent for Christ a gigantic struggle. "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Knowing something of the devil's hatred for God, and of his determination to bring ruin to God's kingdom here on earth, we can well imagine that he paid closer attention, personally, to Jesus than he did to any other person before or after that time. Perhaps we sometimes are inclined to think, when we struggle with the kinds of temptations that call for extraordinary exercise of self-control, that nobody knows the trouble we've seen. Not so. For one thing, "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man" (I Cor. 10:13). But, besides, our struggles pale by comparison to those borne by our Lord when He walked among us.

Is wealth a snare to us? Look to Jesus. If He had chosen, He could have enjoyed the finer things in life. But He didn't. Foxes have their holes, birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay His head. Luxury of living, stylishness of dress, conformity to the vain world — people who value such things cannot look to the example of Christ for justification. Rather, self-denial and plainness of living and manners are the mind of Christ, and ought to be in us who are His disciples.

Is it food and drink that give us a problem? Look to Jesus. He could no doubt enjoy a good meal as much as any man. There is, of course, nothing **wrong** with **that**. God created man such that he can enjoy things that are pleasant to the senses. We read of the trees in the garden of Eden, as they were created by God, that they were both **good to eat** and **pleasant to the sight** (Gen. 2:9) But man's desires have been corrupted. The pleasure of eating tasty food and drinking of the fruit of the vine becomes very easily gluttony and drunkenness. What place, however, did food and drink have in the life of **Jesus**? There were times when He gave Himself so completely to the ministry of the Word that He did not even (much to the consternation of His friends) find **time** to eat (see Mark 3:20, 21). Not always of course was Jesus so pressed by the multitude. There were times of comparative leisure — as for example on the day in which he spent some time with Mary and Martha in their home in Bethany. But even then it becomes obvious that eating and drinking was not a high priority activity for the Master. Martha set about preparing a sumptuous meal for their most honored guest. Mary chose to sit at Jesus' feet and to commune with Him of spiritual things; and Jesus declared that **that** was "the good part."

Do we have trouble budgeting our time such that we have room always in our busy daily schedules for meditation, for prayer, for study of the Scriptures? That takes a good measure of self-discipline, doesn't it? How easy it is to be so busy, from sunup to sundown, with a veritable host of

legitimate and necessary activities, that we just don't find time for communion with God! Look to Jesus. What did **He** do when things got really busy? "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). And that apparently followed an evening in which "all the city" had gathered at the door of the house in which He stayed, bringing with them their sick in order that He might heal them. I suspect that, after such a full day, **we** would have thought ourselves entitled to "sleep in" the next morning. We need our rest, after all. But so did Jesus. He was not any stronger, physically, than we are. Sleep therefore was just as necessary and pleasant for Him as for us — and getting out of bed, especially **early**, probably just as distasteful. But, knowing as He did the necessity of fellowship with and prayer to His Father, He disciplined His physical body in order to provide time for it.

Do we have difficulty controlling our anger in the face of provocation? Look to Jesus. Think of the time when he and His disciples planned to pass through a city of the Samaritans, on their way to Jerusalem for the last Passover. The Samaritans of that particular city refused to give Him food or lodging, because "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:53). James and John were stung by this rejection of their Master. Their attitude was well expressed in their question to Jesus, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" Vengeance was what they wanted, for a perceived insult. Ah, how like us! But Jesus Who was Himself the real object of that rejection, rebuked those disciples, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." And they passed on to another village.

To speak at all of self-control as that was exercised by Christ, one must of course make some reference to His enduring the taunts of the wicked at His cross. "If he be the King of Israel," the mockers say, "let him now come down. . . . He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him, for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:42, 43). Jesus hangs there, to all appearances helpless, on the cross. What therefore has come of all His claims? To think that He could be the King of the Jews, **on the cross**, is preposterous! But even more inconceivable it is, they say, that the **Son of God** could have been subjected to the treatment that Jesus had received during the past few hours, and then be hanged on a tree. The fact that it happened, and that He now does not come down, puts the lie to all His claims. He remains there — because He cannot come down. And He cannot come down — because He is not the Son of God. God disowns Him; God will not have Him. He's an impostor.

Who of us would need half that kind of challenge to our veracity, half that abuse, half that slander, before we would happily abandon any thought of self-control? The godless Sanhedrists argued in effect that such self-control was unthinkable. They made their case here on the assumption that no man would ever need that much provocation to use whatever means were at his disposal to clear himself and to wreak vengeance on his enemies. They could not conceive of a power that is not exercised in self-interest. They acted therefore as if they had an airtight

case. Jesus did not escape crucifixion, and once on the cross He did not come down, simply because He had not the power to do so.

Satan, without doubt, knew better. By the taunts of the Sanhedrists, the soldiers, the passers-by, and one of the other victims of crucifixion, he was trying to provoke Jesus, Whom he **knew** to be the Son of God, to come down from that cross. The devil thus made one last desperate attempt to turn Christ from the way of obedience. But it was futile. Though His glorious name was being dragged in the dirt, and though His blessed body was suffering the excruciating pain which belonged to death by crucifixion, Jesus stayed on the cross, saving not Himself but, in the way of perfect obedience. . .me.

Compared to the trials which our Lord endured, our own struggles of self-control — whether that be with regard to gluttony, sexual impurity, spiritual laziness, outbursts of temper, envy, materialism, or whatever — may seem slight indeed. In no way however do we mean to suggest that the battle, for the child of God, is not a fierce one. It is. Solomon says of temperance, of self-control, that "he that ruleth his spirit (is better) than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). In commenting on that inspired observation, Charles Bridges writes, "The taking of a city is child's play, compared with this wrestling. . . . That is only the battle of a day. This, the weary, unceasing conflict of a life." A conflict it surely is, for we fight against the wiles of the devil, who aims at nothing less than our destruction. And, further, we are at war with the lusts of our own flesh, which is ever with us. We may wish for the eradication of the tendencies of our corrupt natures, but the truth is that in this life it will not happen. To be above temptations, in fact, would be to have a higher life on earth than our Lord had. We must learn therefore to **resist** temptation and to **govern** our appetites. And, just because Christ Himself "suffered being tempted," we can look to Him for that standard of moral excellence which God requires that we strive after.

Better it is to say that we **must** look to Him. As Arthur W. Pink put it in a little pamphlet entitled "Personal Holiness," let a man "either put on the **life** of Christ or drop the **name** of Christ" (emphasis added). The point is that to be or not to be an imitator of Christ is not for the child of God an optional spiritual luxury. "Be ye followers (i.e., **imitators**) of me," writes the Apostle Paul, "even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). Notice that he does not say simply "**Believe** what Jesus **taught**," but "**Live** the way He **lived**." We do well, surely, to heed what Jesus taught. The truth is that no purer precepts than those given by Christ in His Word are to be found anywhere in the world. But Paul stresses the fact here that Jesus gave to those precepts the force of a perfect example of purity in disposition and walk, and that that example has been left for us to follow.

It is impossible for one to be a follower of Jesus and at the same time to have a casual attitude with respect to the matter of temperance. Jesus said as much when He declared, "If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**. . ." (Luke 9:23). That's necessary because the natural man minds "the things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5). By nature he understands, he pursues, he relishes only the things of

this world. Christ, as we have seen repeatedly in our study of the fruit of the Spirit, was not at all like that. And those in whom is the mind of Christ, must mind heavenly things, as He did. Their affections must be set on things above, not on things below. Their life must be characterized by a spiritual-mindedness, as that constitutes the grand difference between those who follow Christ and those who do not.

How evident is that difference in **your** life? How **serious** are you about imitating Christ? It is true, of course, that our salvation is not conditioned, even in the very least, on any meritorious work of our own; but that does not remove the "fear and trembling" which the inspired Apostle associates with the working out of our salvation (Phil. 2:12). And in our striving, the standard by which we must measure our lives is nothing less than the perfect life of Christ. I ask again, how serious are we in actually **using** that standard?

At the time of this writing, there are not students in our seminary. We have to be careful about drawing conclusions as to the reason for this state of affairs, but we cannot help but wonder if a contributing factor is that too few of us look **first** at how we can best serve our Lord Christ in our life's work.

Not all of us can be ministers or missionaries or teachers, but all of us can assist in the support of that work. Look around you, sometime, when you park your car in the church lot on Sunday. There's enough money represented there on wheels to send a missionary (or two or three, depending on the size of the lot) anywhere in the world for a year. Nothing wrong with a nice car, of course, but I wonder sometimes if our **appetites**, in many different things, are being mistaken for **necessities**. I like the way George Bethune put it: "A yet further reason for self-denial is that the limits we think are those of lawful indulgence are continually though imperceptibly enlarging. He who once thought a small house would be enough for him finds himself straitened in a palace." How easy it is to view the things we would **like** to have as being things we **should** have. And then the causes of God's kingdom go begging. One of the most difficult problems facing school boards is how to balance tight budgets. And synods, in the interest of fiscal responsibility, are very conscious of the budgetary implications of every decision taken regarding the churches' mission activities. So our synodical assessments set our families back $434 per year. For the cause of the proclamation of the gospel: $434! And we continue to drive our Oldsmobiles, buy our motor homes, take our European vacations. Young people, how about you? Do you pick up this spirit early (by imitation)? Do you buy cars you can ill afford, frequent fast-food restaurants, think nothing of the cost of going with friends to a major league baseball game. . .and have a buck or two for the collection plates on Sunday?

I'm not saying that a child of God must deny himself every pleasure available to him in this life. (It happens that I myself drive an Olds — an **old** Olds, it's true, but it was not always such — and I've been in Europe.) One need not reduce himself to a state of poverty to be a member of the church of Christ. But I cannot help but wonder, in connection with our study of this particular manifestation of the fruit

of the Spirit in our lives, if we really see the things of this world for what they are, in the light of eternity, namely empty bubbles. Our Lord never developed any relish for the vanities of this life. We have. And though "things" are not wrong in themselves, nor the use of them to be categorically condemned, much of our taste for material possessions and earthly pleasures is to our shame. We are in this world for one reason only: to glorify God in our service to our risen Savior. We all agree with that of course in **theory**, and as a **point of doctrine**; but what does it mean, **practically**, in our lives? It means that, in choosing a vocation, we look **first** at **service**. . .and make the matter of job security, salary, and satisfaction a secondary consideration. It means that, in deciding what to do with money earned, we see it not as a question of how much of **our** money we should give to the service of the **Lord**, but rather as a question of how much of the **Lord's** money we can justifiably spend on **ourselves**. We are not, you see, **owners**, but **stewards**. And, rest assured, we are accountable for every dime.

The genuineness of saving faith is proved only as it shows itself in experimental godliness, in the fruits of true piety, in the fruit of the Spirit in our **lives**. Because our natures are opposed to the Spirit, the practice of that godliness does not come without a **struggle**. It requires serious commitment and persevering effort. If there's one thing that I hope we've come more to appreciate in our consideration of the fruit of the Spirit in this series of articles it's this, that the race which we are called to run must be characterized by **intensity**. "Every man that **striveth for the mastery** is temperate. . . (I Cor. 9:25). The battle with our depraved lusts requires a day-in-and-day-out, lifelong self-discipline. Even then, of course, our depravity is such that our victories will not correspond to our Spirit-motivated desires. In fact, concerning our failures, one of the ancient church fathers is said to have cried, "Blessed Lord, either these are not Thy precepts, or we are not Christians." Perfection we will not reach, on this side of the grave. But the question nevertheless is this, does the love of Christ so **compel** you that you **press** to the goal of godly perfection? Do you ardently **long** to resemble the Savior? If so, be not dejected. For that desire is of the **Lord**. Continue to look much at Jesus, in the Holy Scriptures. The more you do, the more, by His grace, you will look like Him. And before long you will see Him as He is, and be satisfied; for when He shall appear, you shall be at last like Him, perfectly, forever (I John 3:2).

. . . It will be necessary to call to your remembrance what I formerly observed, viz., that the safety of the Church depends as much on this doctrine as human life does on the soul. If the purity of this doctrine is in any degree impaired, the Church has received a deadly wound; and therefore, when I have shown that it was for the greater part extinguished, it will be the same as if I had shown that the Church had been brought to the very brink of destruction.

John Calvin

The Fruit of the Spirit
TEMPERANCE

by Mary Beth Lubbers

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. . . .

Daniel 1:8

And so, finally, we come to temperance, the last of nine evidences of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. What is temperance? Who is the temperate man that Galatians would have us know?

Simply put, temperance is self--control. It is the virtue which is best defined by its opposite, excess or indulgence. Sometimes we like to speak of temperance as "moderation in all things." To the proponents of this definition temperance is drinking liquor but not to the point of drunkenness. It is regular and sumptuous dining, but not to the extreme of gluttony. It is watching television, but not being glued to the tube. It is partying with the boys on a given night, but not partying five nights out of the week. It is freely spending money, but not at the expense of paying the church budget. Sometimes we are inclined to think of temperance as sinning just a little, not a whole lot.

The nice thing about defining temperance as moderation in all things is that really no one can ever accuse you of being immoderate or intemperate in your manner of living and leisure since moderation necessarily involves a good deal of what we call "Christian liberty." So you think that my six-pack a day is too much alcohol? Well, let me tell you not only to mind your own business, but you can be thankful that I don't drink a couple Southern Comforts to boot. My Christian liberty, you know. And just where in the Bible does God legislate the strength or intake of alcoholic beverages? Maybe a six-pack is a sin for you — and then you had better not drink it either — but it definitely is not a sin for me. And so goes such argumentation. Good argumentation too, for even Jesus taught, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11).

It occurs to me that it is too simplistic to identify temperance as moderation. Moderation is certainly included in temperance, but that is not its essential character. Temperance, at its very core, is saying "no" to sin. It is saying "no" to anything that takes on the appearance of sin (I Thessalonians 5:22). It is even a big "no" to the compromising position in which we sometimes put ourselves and which circumstance makes it extremely difficult to say "no" to the eventual temptation which follows.

We must think of temperance as "keeping under your body, and bringing it into subjection" as found in I Corinthians 9:27. It must always be a "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, making not provision for the flesh, to

fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). The temperate man is a man concentrating all his attention upon doing God's will, not letting any earthly consideration interfere with this calling. He is the man who disciplines himself in every area of life to conform more and more to God's perfect law as guided by the new spirit of grace within him.

Often the calculated and well-thought-out decision to be temperate must be made the **first** time one is confronted with any excess, any temptation which leads to sin. One must not parley with sin or postpone its urgency. Like a young Joseph, one must **set his heart** against sin. Like a youthful David, one must refute the imperious demands of sin at the outset.

• • •

I am Ashpenaz, prince of the eunuchs of the great King Nebuchadnezzar. For many years I stood before his majestic personage, carrying out every royal caprice and command. I am very old now, having seen the rise and fall of these great ones in Babylon — Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar his son, and Darius the Mede. But for all this, I have fallen out of favor with the mighty ones of Babylon. Nevertheless, for my faithful years of service to these gods of Babylon, I have not been killed as so many of my companions have, nor subjected to the austere punishments which are so whimsically inflicted on dissidents (fiery furnace, dens of lions, "cut into pieces"); I have merely been exiled to this humble hut far from the palace of Babylon and the court activity in which I once played such an active role. Here I muse on the golden days of Babylon, now past. For even as I write this, another enemy, Cyrus of Persia, readies his forces for the takeover of this crumbling decadent city. "Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come" (Revelation 18:10). But before I die, I take stylus and tablet in hand to tell you a most curious and compelling tale. It came about in this manner.

During the reign of Jehoiakim, King of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, went into Jerusalem and besieged it, carrying home not only the spoils of war (including the intricate and costly vessels from the House of Judah's God), but also, and especially, the prized and princely young captives of royal descent. One of these captives, Daniel by Hebrew name, had a most significant impact on the great King Nebuchadnezzar, on me, and even on the life pulses of the proud city of Babylon.

But to understand this Daniel, one has to see him against the city into which he was brought.

There was certainly ample reason for Nebuchadnezzar to boast, "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built?" For he has made this magnificent city one of the wonders of the world, an unrivaled capital of the Near East. "The merchants of the earth waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies" (Revelation 18:3).

Babylon stands on a spacious plain occupying about 196 square miles. Around the city is a deep and broad moat full of water. Both city and moat are surrounded by a wall which makes a circuit of some 56 miles. I would reckon this wall to be over 300 feet high and almost 90 feet thick — so broad that a four-horse chariot can easily be driven across it. The gates of our city are made of marble and iron and brass and are guarded by images of winged bulls, giant serpents, and fearsome

dragons. Outside these city gates live most of Babylon's citizens — her artisans, her workmen, and her merchants. These folk live in modest houses of unbaked clay; their standard of living is poor, but they are just as rich in superstition and sorcery as their compatriots within the city gates.

Opulence within the city gates stands in marked contrast to the humble huts outside. Two royal palaces adorn the city, ornately decorated with heads of gods, animals, and many statues. Each brick in these palaces bears the proud inscription, "I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon." The interior of these palaces is lavish with gold, silver, costly materials of wood and ivory, and precious stones and pearls. These splendid palaces were built for Nebuchadnezzar, but equally celebrated temples and festival houses were built for Babylon's 65,000 gods and goddesses (Marduk the sun god and Ishtar, a bearded bisexual diety, being the most famous). For it must be remembered that Babylon is a civilization rich in myth and superstition, "the hold of every foul spirit" (Revelation 18:2), and the wishes and demands of the gods must always be assuaged and catered to. "The gods were not aloof from men; most of them lived on earth in the temples, ate with a hearty appetite, and through nocturnal visits to pious women gave unexpected children to the busy citizens of Babylon" (**Our Oriental Hertiage**, Will Durant, p. 234).

It was for these gods that a great and magnificent causeway was built — higher than the houses themselves — for the festal days of the procession of the gods. Walls of glazed tiles portraying life-size lions decorated the causeway on each side.

As much as 9/10 of the city consists of gardens (the most renowned being the Hanging Gardens which Nebuchadnezzar built for his queen who expressed a longing for her native hills and mountains), parks, paradises, fields, and orchards. And right through the center of the city flows the Euphrates River, its banks lush with palms, willows, and exotic flowers and shrubs; its waters rich with commerce and trade.

The learning and knowledge in this city is unparalleled. It is unexcelled in language and literature, in astronomy and mathematics, in agriculture and architecture, in painting and music, in law and medicine, in religion and philosophy.

Within this city, every pleasure and pastime conceivable to those of wealth and leisure takes place. Every deviant practice, sexual atrocity, and laxity of men and morals is prevalent. Within these high protected walls men of high degree were satiated with "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (I John 2:16). It is a city "full of abomination and filthiness"; it is "THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (Revelation 17:4 and 5). Effeminate degeneracy is ordinary; fathers prostitute their daughters for money; every native woman is obliged once in her lifetime to sit in Venus' temple and have intercourse with a stranger. And while Babylon gives itself up to revelry and debauchery, to eating and drinking and being merry — for tomorrow we die — a young boy far from his faith, home, and people walks into this city, gives new meaning to a ten-letter word called temperance, and forever alters the course of Babylonian history.

Daniel was not the only Hebrew

captive to be brought into Babylon during these times (10,000 captives from Judah alone, II Kings 24:14); there were many lads of nobility and rank from all of Nebuchadnezzar's conquests throughout the world. It was my duty to initiate a certain number of these boys to Babylonian traditions, and assist them in making the adaptation to a foreign land. Particularly, at this time, four boys were given into my charge. It was Nebuchadnezzar's practice to change the native names of all his captives and confer Babylon names upon them at once. Thus, Daniel, "God is My Judge", became Belteshazzar. Daniel had no choice in this matter and I doubt that it bothered him a great deal. In his own mind God was always his Judge, as his subsequent life in Babylon showed.

I noticed very soon upon his arrival at Nebuchadnezzar's illustrious court that Daniel was of strong physique, superior intellect, and of the highest character. Here indeed was a lad who would be worthy to drink at the fountain of Babylon's knowledge, culture, and wisdom. I was eager to begin his rigorous training, for I was convinced that in him I had an apt pupil, old enough to make adjustments to this alien land, yet young enough to learn easily and feel at home in this new setting. By Nebuchadnezzar's decree he, along with the others (including his three closest friends), would study extensively in the Babylonian ways — and I knew immediately that this young man would master them.

You can imagine, then, how surprised I was to encounter Daniel's refusal so soon upon his arrival at the royal palace. Nebuchadnezzar's decision was that these young men should eat from his own table in order to hasten their adaptation to Babylon and secure their success in their studies. His philosophy ran something like this, "Strong, healthy bodies ensure strong, healthy minds." 'Tis true, the luxury of fine dining was a deliberate design by the king to weaken old loyalties and foster new allegiances. And most young captives were only too eager to lap up Babylon's culinary delights. Captives were accustomed to and expecting abuse. How it surprised them to discover favors instead. This too was a deliberate psychological ploy. But Daniel never fell for it.

Nevertheless, when Daniel refused to eat the king's meat or drink his wine, requesting pulse and water instead, not only did he put himself on dangerous ground, but he also jeopardized my high standing in court. Nebuchadnezzar had literally **commanded** the captives to eat of his food. Disobedience would certainly incur punishment, and as I've told you before this was never light or superficial in Babylon. Moreover, to speak of defilement in this matter of food, as Daniel had, could only be considered insulting to Nebuchadnezzar's generosity.

Didn't Daniel know that besides incurring the king's wrath, disobedience would certainly be a barrier to any future progress and promotion? Could he not compromise on this moot point seeing he was far from home — "My parents will never know?" Wasn't he aware that a refusal to eat the delicacies from the king's table would mean mockery and jeering from the other boys? True, the king's food was regularly consecrated to the Babylon gods before it was eaten, and Daniel had told me that it was against his religion to eat meat offered to idols, but

even I knew that his choice of such a restricted diet was by no means normal Hebrew fare. I was appalled to find such resistance to eating the king's dainties, and his speaking of defilement in this way at a mere 14 or 15 years of age — well, Daniel as yet had no idea of the defilement which Babylon could offer. Yet, he was determined to nourish his body frugally, lest he become intemperate.

So he came to me with candor, politely requesting that I give him and his three friends a ten-day trial period during which they would dine on pulse and water only. I had not the heart to refuse, even though I knew I should, because this young man had gained my favor immediately. I knew instinctively that here was no impudent young upstart, but rather, a boy of high moral stance. Having dealt daily with deceit, guile, and cleverly disguised intentions as I did, this lad was like a rare gem glinting in the mud. For whatever reason, I agreed to his astonishing proposal. And if ever in my life I did one good thing, this was it. May the gods smile on me for my answer to Daniel.

You know now the sequel to my story, for I too have had opportunity to see the divinely-inspired book which Daniel has written. You know how Daniel and his three friends continued to eat their chosen fare because the trial period only served to heighten their shining faces, superior physiques, and cunning intellects. You know how Daniel's God revealed to him not only interpretations of dreams, but the very dreams themselves, catapulting him to the very highest offices in the kingdom. You know how his initial "no" to becoming Babylonianized made easier many other "nos" which he and his three friends were forced to make during their captivity in Babylon. You also know how, because of Daniel's first "no", his three friends were able to say "no" to another decree of the king and stand unscathed in Nebuchadnezzar's hottest furnaces. You know how Daniel's God, his race, and his faith never became remote or outdated to him, all the cunningly devised schemes of the king notwithstanding.

What you don't know is that the lot of all Jehovah's people was made easier because of this young boy who said "no." Jehovah's people enjoyed good farms in Babylon; many owned their own homes; they had freedom to come and go; they were able to continue their own institutions of elders, priests, and prophets; they had good job opportunities; they were able to correspond with those left behind in Judah. And yes, many in Babylon, myself included, came to hold Daniel's God in high esteem. Here was a holy and powerful God, much in contrast to our gods of greed and impotence. . . and this boy's entire life reflected Him. Daniel never succumbed to the filth and slime of Babylon's manners and morals. At a tender age, by his temperance, he overcame the enticements of a godless court and city.

I found out, too, that for Jehovah's people saying "no" to sin is not just for teenagers; it encompasses a lifetime — be it 70 or 80 years old as Daniel was when he had to say "no" even at that old age and thus endure Darius' den of lions. Here was a temperate man to the end of his days.

And now, I, Ashpenaz, have nearly filled this tablet. Yet, before the clay hardens and I set my name to this document, I must tell you one thing

more: it is certain that Daniel's God placed him at this heathen court to declare to successive monarchs the truth of that curious dream which my lord, the great King Nebuchadnezzar, dreamed. For I, even in my lifetime, am seeing the stone made without hands growing in strength, size, and velocity as it strikes the fleeting and temporal kingdoms of this world to crush them to powder. And even now, Cyrus marches to Babylon's gates. But the kingdom of Daniel's God fills the earth. It will endure forever. I know this for a truth. For I have seen it in the life of one of His servants, Daniel.

News From the Contact Committee

The Contact Committee of our Protestant Reformed Churches in America on the behalf of our Synod brings to your attention the financial need of the Protestant Reformed Church of Wellington, New Zealand.

The readership of this publication is undoubtedly aware that a very small, struggling, and independent Church at Wellington, New Zealand has asked for and has been granted sister church relationship with us.

This Protestant Reformed Church of six families requested $13,450.00 in aid per year for five years. Presently and for the past decade or more these saints have been without a shepherd of their own and have had to make do with sermon tapes for their spiritual food and guidance. The aid requested would enable them to support their own undershepherd, whom they would call from one of our Churches.

Synod judged the request of these brethren justified. But Synod did not consider it proper to add this amount to our synodical assessments which are shared equally by all our families. Many of our people bear extremely heavy financial responsibilities to our Churches and our Christian Schools. Our Synod was very sensitive to this reality of life.

Our people, however, have always shown themselves willing and generous when called upon to give for various kingdom causes. Therefore, we ask those who can, to give from the heart for the support of the ministry of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Church of Wellington, New Zealand.

In addition, we invite those faithful readers of this publication who are not members of our Churches to help us in this labor of love.

Send your gifts to Mr. Richard Teitsma, our synodical treasurer. Please be careful to designate for which fund your gift is sent. Mr. Teitsma's address is: 4830 Green Moor Ct., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

In The Love of Christ Jesus,
Rev. M. Kamps
For the Committee of Contact

The Fruit of the Spirit
DEVELOPING TEMPERANCE

by Rev. R. Van Overloop

After Saul knew that God would give the kingdom to David, his wrath and jealousy were kindled toward David to such an extent that he dealt treacherously with David over a long time and tried to kill him at every opportunity. He would take Israel's army in constant pursuit of the fulfillment of his maddening lust for David's blood, even if it left the nation defenseless.

Put yourself in David's position. How might you feel toward a man who was trying in every possible way to kill you?

Late one night, while Saul and all his army were sleeping, David came out of his hiding place, descended to Israel's camp, and walked up to the sleeping Saul. David was encouraged to take this golden opportunity to kill Saul. In fact, it was even put into spiritual terms, "God has delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day" (I Samuel 26:8).

How does David react?

This is an exercise of the fruit of the Spirit called "temperance". David was conscious of God's presence and of God's will. He gave more value to God's will than to his own desires and feelings.

For David God was very near. David's reason for not killing Saul was because Saul was God's anointed. David tempered his own desires by doing what God desired.

(A parenthetical thought: if David had killed Saul that night and not spared his life, could he have said, "The LORD is the strength of my life," and "in this I will be confident though an host should encamp against me." Could he have written, "For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in his pavilion." Who would have believed him when he said, "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.")

David was very conscious of doing God's will. He controlled his own natural desires to kill one who was trying to kill him.

This doing of God's will is temperance. It is the conscious giving over of the various aspects of our life to God's control. It is living in obedience to Him.

What areas of your life are you unable to control (or to let God control)?

Is temperance ever needed!

Most men govern their lives by their desires and emotions. Frequently people give as the reason why they did or did not do something: "I feel like it" or "I don't want to" or something similar. Free reign is given to most desires. If it feels good, do it. If you feel strongly that you must do something or if you have peace about it, it is believed that that is sufficient reason. Even obedience of God's law is often determined by whether we feel like it or not. The impression given is that

desires and emotions are sinless.

A tight reign must be held on our emotions and desires. This is self-control. It is a disciplining of oneself to conform more and more to the performance of God's will.

By virtue of his creation man is a servant of God. By this act God set out what was best and good for man. Within the sphere of his being a willing servant of God, man realized his full potential, and experienced the great joy which always accompanied his obedience.

But the devil deceived man into thinking that this position of being God's friend-servant is slavery of the worst sort, a slavery which deprives man of personal rights and liberties. Becoming a rebel against this service to God, man believed that he had the right to decide for himself what is right and what is wrong, and the right to live as he pleased. This, man thought and thinks, is freedom. The delusion continues, for whereas his "freedom" brings only misery, natural man is convinced that misery results from others depriving him of his rights.

The Lord Jesus Christ removed these blinding scales of unbelief from the eyes of some natural men. He enables those to whom He gives sight to see that to be enslaved to God and to Christ is real freedom. The truth shall make you free. It is in doing God's will that man reaches the potential of his created and redeemed abilities and experiences real joy. The doing of God's will is freedom from the slavery of sin.

The child of God CAN develop self-control. He MUST develop it!

He can, because God's power is working in him, not only in regeneration, but constantly by His indwelling Spirit. This divine power is so real that the child of God is described as being a partaker of the divine nature.. This power gives all things that pertain to spiritual life and godliness (II Peter 1:3, 4). The believer can develop self-control, "for sin shall not have dominion over you" (Romans 6:14).

He must develop it. Exactly because God's "divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness", we are told, "giving diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge **temperance**; and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (II Peter 1:5-7).

We already have faith by virtue of our being called of God. This faith is not to remain barren and unfruitful. As God works in us, it is certain that we, through the power of the Spirit, can and must work, although in weakness.

Not only must the virtue of temperance (along with the other aspects of the fruit of the Spirit) be developed, but also it must be developed with all diligence, i.e., with haste. Diligence because time is swiftly passing. Diligence because the treasure of God's divine power is precious. Wasted opportunities to develop temperance must be avoided like one would avoid a plague. Diligence and earnestness make faith fruitful. Without diligence, faith, though genuine, will bear few and shrivelled fruit.

How can temperance be developed? II Peter 1:6 indicates that self-control is built on knowledge.

First, all the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit are characteristics of God. As we get to know God better, we will be able to be more like Him - and so take

on these characteristics.

Also, the knowledge of God's work in Christ for us, the knowledge of His working in us by His Spirit, and the knowledge of His will for us as described in His Word, give the power to keep all desires and emotions under control. We can because we know that Christ delivered us from the dominion of sin. We can because we know that God created us in Christ Jesus unto good works. We know how we can because the Bible teaches us to depend prayerfully on God. We ask God to increase our spiritual sensitivity as we read His Word. We ask Him to grant the grace of humility to obey, even when we do not want to or feel like it, because we recognize God's sovereign right and His wisdom in demanding of us what He does demand. We ask Him to make His loving presence so real that we delight to do His will.

This is not a legalistic abstinence. Prohibitionists outlawed liquor, many mistakenly thinking that this was self-control. The celibacy of Rome's priests is also a legalistic abstinence and not the exercise of the godly, spiritual virtue of temperance.

Temperance is power over oneself, self-control, whereby one masters his desires and emotions through the knowledge of the Word and of God's will. It is being in subjection to God. Temperance is concentrating on doing God's will, and not letting earthly considerations interfere with this Divinely required obedience. The knowledge of what God has done for Him brings this self-control.

Temperance comes through the knowledge of Christ's self-control on the cross, when not nails but His love for God and for His people held Him on the cross. The knowledge that God is still working in us by His Spirit and for us in all things motivates the genuine believer to the realization that he must and can control himself.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

by Nancy Van Baren

THE LORD BLESSED:

-Mr. and Mrs. Dan Mastbergen of First Church with a son.

-Mr. and Mrs. Bob Faber of First Church with a daughter, Kimberly Anne.

-Mr. and Mrs. Nick Kooiker of Hull with a son.

-Mr. and Mrs. Curt Veldman of Kalamazoo with a daughter.

-Mr. and Mrs. Robert Brands of Loveland with a daughter, Brenda Jean.

-Mr. and Mrs. Louis Regnerus of South Holland with a son, Luke Richard.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:

-South Holland received the membership papers of the Henry Zandstra family from Randolph.

-Holland received the membership papers of Mrs. Joel (Clarena) Hirdes.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

-Thad Lubbers made public confession of faith in South Holland on July 20.

-Janna Van Baren made public confession of faith on July 27 in Loveland.

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Details will follow next month.