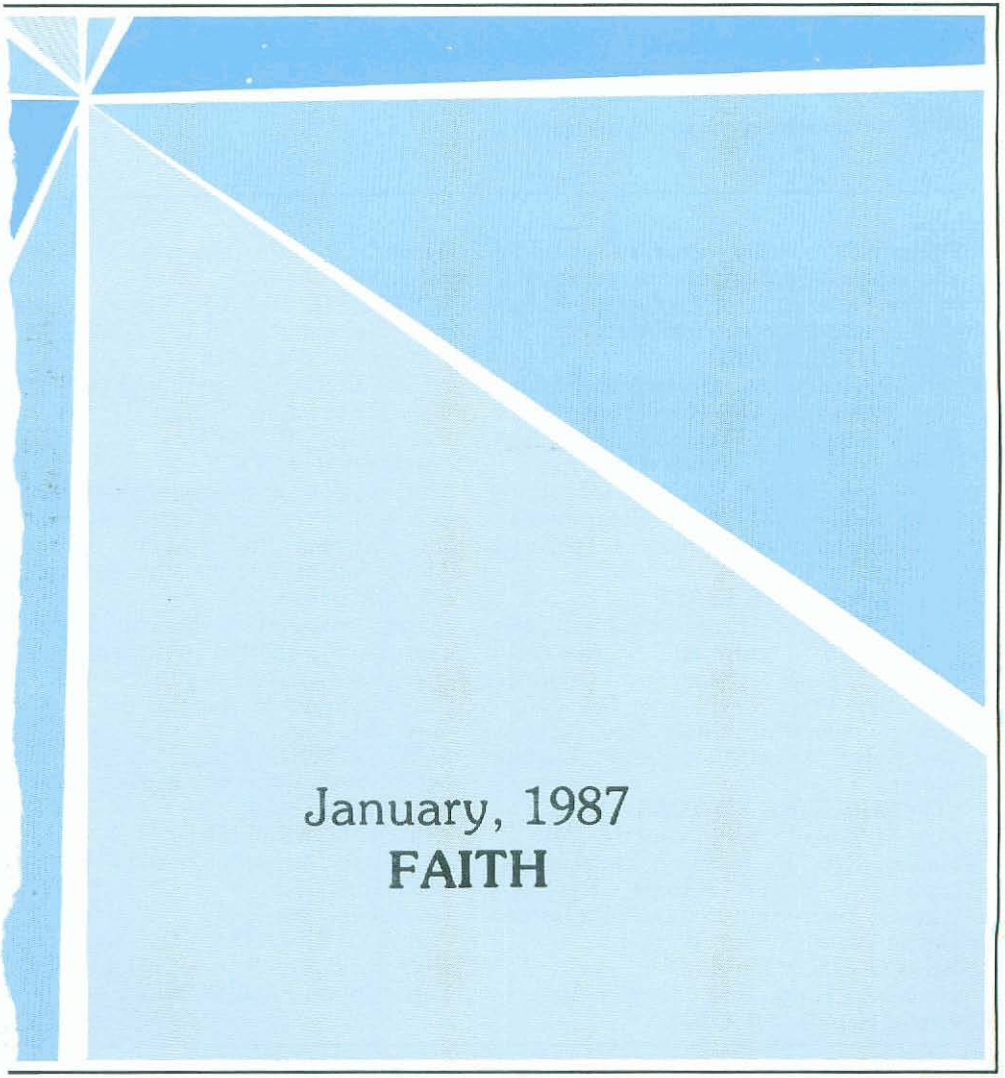
BEACON LIGHTS

FOR PROTESTANT REFORMED YOUTH

VOLUME XLVI NUMBER 1



January, 1987

FAITH

BEACON LIGHTS

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

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Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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

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Responsibilities of Conception:
II. THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TRAIN

by Mrs. H. Brands

We had a sociology class when I was in college in which we spent much time belaboring the question of what is the chief characteristic (we called it **mode**) of the various institutions in society. Concerning marriage, for instance, what is its chief characteristic? Is is spiritual or biological or psychical or social or what?

Without getting deeply involved in the various social spheres, for this article we must begin by distinguishing, **as does the Bible**, between marriage and the family as institutions. The marriage is one institution and the family is another, even though they are closely connected and are united under the one concept of the home. Marriage was instituted in Genesis 1:27 and 2:22-25, which read:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Christ interprets these verses in Matthew 19, and also Paul shows its spiritual analogy in Ephesians 5, to show that marriage is a total unity of two persons. It is established socially as a biological unity but is fundamentally a spiritual unity in which two separate people become intrinsically one, so united that a wife is in total submissive agreement with her husband and the husband is in total loving service of his wife as if feeding his own body. This discussion could be extended for chapters under the topic of marriage alone.

By contrast, the family, is the **extension** of marriage and the **fruit** of marriage but may not be confused with the institution of marriage itself. The family is a distinct institution of God, originated in Genesis 1:28:

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

Following the fall into sin, the curse of God fell upon both marriage and family (apart from grace) so that God through the Psalmist said,

"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Yet God in principle restored the blessedness of the family for His people so that those who walk in His covenant know:

"If ye walk in my statutes. . .I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you." (Leviticus 26:3a & 9)

"Lo children are an heritage of the LORD! and the fruit of the womb is his

reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." (Psalm 127:3-5a)
"Thy children shall be like olive plants round about thy table." (Psalm 128:3b)
We see here that the family extension of marriage is a great blessing, a fruitfulness given by God, and that it is an extension into further fellowship and fruitfulness. Both marriage and the family are rooted in love- in unity, which is socially biological but which spiritually encompasses the whole life. The family however, remains always the **extension** of that primary marital life in such a way that the marriage life **produces** the family in every way, not only biologically but in every area of life. And so, the primary calling of the home in relation to the children is to **train** the children, to train them spiritually and in relation to all of life.
This is clearly seen throughout all of Scripture: "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)
"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD. . . ." (Genesis 18:19a)
"these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto they children. . . ." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7a)
"whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (Proverbs 3:12)
"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6)
(See also Proverbs 13:24, 19:18; 23:13-14, and more.)
From these verses and all of Scripture, we can see that training the children is the basic characteristic of the family. This would have been true even in the hypothetical family had there been no fall into sin. In our sinful world it involves many griefs and includes chastening and often sternness which are results of sin, yet training remains the key characteristic of the relationship between marriage partners to their family.

The training of the family always has three essential and interwoven components. Without any of these, the training is simply not properly there and must fail before God.

#1. TRAINING BEGINS WITH EXAMPLE.

Parents cannot expect children to be something which they themselves are not. Children are **reflections** of parents, their **offspring**, their **look-alikes!** If parents walk in sin - yes, they are still training their children, but - they are training their children to sin. It is a devil's hoax to say, "Do as I say, not as I do." Just as each Christian is gradually conformed to the image of the heavenly Father as seen in Christ, so also children of earthly parents conform to the image of their parents. If earthly parents are **earthy** parents (that is, earth-centered rather than God-centered) only **earthly** children can result. But where the grace of God operates in parents to make them godly parents - loving God with all their heart and thus loving also their neighbor, including their children - there God's grace will also apply this example to the hearts of the elect children in calling them from their natural foolishness to imitate their earthly parents in loving their spiritual Father.

Haven't you seen this often?

Watch young children walk. If

heir parents saunter the children aunter. If the parents stride, the .ildren stride.

Watch their mannerisms. If the parents slouch, the children slouch. If the parents whistle, the children try to whistle. If the parents slobber as they eat, the children slobber as they eat.

Listen to their speech. If the parents brag a lot, the children will brag. If the parents ridicule the church, the children learn quickly to ridicule the church. If the parents run down women and motherhood, the children quickly learn to dishonor their mother.

Example is the first and strongest teacher!

#2. TRAINING CONTINUES WITH INSTRUCTION

That old school of Dutchmen was wrong which said that the person who speaks much of spiritual things is a hypocrite and that true spirituality is seen in actions alone apart from words. True, godliness begins in the heart and is confirmed in consistent living, and true, where godly living is absent, words are lifeless. But where there is godly life in the heart, confirmed by a consistent godly life, there also this life will be expressed in **speech**.

So too with training. Let's go again to Deuteronomy 6. "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest. . . when thou walkest. . .when thou liest down. . .when thou risest up." (6:7)

Or, read the book of Proverbs. This **whole book** is the **verbal instruction** which a father should give his children! Solomon says words (1:2) of instruction (1:3) will give wisdom to the young man, his son (1:4-6). The father in Proverbs says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (1:8). The father says to his son, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words" (2:1). He says, "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father. . ." (4:1). Over and over, oral instruction is emphasized and demanded.

Oral instruction of children demands **mental** knowledge on the part of fathers and mothers. Parents who have been lazy in their own pursuit of knowledge won't have much to offer their children.

It also demands **spiritual** knowledge on the part of the parents. Parents without the love of God themselves cannot possibly teach the love of God.

I can feel this so much in working with my own small children! Even in the teaching of catechism or Bible stories, the parent in his instruction must not teach mere head knowledge but must teach the love of God. This begins with the fear of God in holy respect for holy things. Catechism may be taught until it is letter-perfect but is worthless if it is not learned with holy reverence for God.

For children of any age - small, teenage or adult - this means being thankful for parental instruction. Mockery is so common and so easy. Don't mock the holy speech of parents which has the goal of instruction in godliness! Be thankful for parents who speak of God and of His Word, who instruct in godliness, who warn against sin which can so swiftly destroy youth and the whole life. Read Proverbs frequently to hear the instruction parents should be giving their children. And **thank God** when your parents obey Him by instructing you!

#3. TRAINING CULMINATES IN MOLDING.

Along with example and instruc-

tion, training includes careful supervision of children with an insistence that they conform to the Biblical pattern of godliness. Parents are, much to their frequent chagrin, responsible for the sin of their children. The children's sin has its roots in the parents' own sinful natures and God holds them responsible for it to the extent that they do not fight and counteract sin in their children.

This does **not** mean parental strangling of a child's personality. A pear tree must not be changed into an apple tree. Nor may an apple tree be derooted and pruned to remain a dwarf tree; any horticulturist knows that a dwarf tree has less fruit and a far shorter life expectancy than a full-grown, untampered tree.

Molding a child **does** mean constant awareness of the child's development with interception whenever needed to aid the child in his struggle to maturity. A pear tree needs more protection against winter cold than does an apple tree. Some trees need more watering than other trees. All trees need sufficient watering and sufficient food supply. Trees need to be sprayed for pests and blight, and, especially while young, to be protected from weeds.

Molding a child **does** mean chastening as necessary - first verbal reproof, gently, then sternly, and then use of physical discipline in proportion to the degree of sin on the part of the child.

There is no such thing as a single foolproof method of raising a child and that is why most books on **how** to raise a child fail. Without a doubt, there are many things which a Christian parent ought **not** to do in training a child. Also without doubt, every Scriptural directive is foolproof. So we can receive advice and learn from each other. But yet there is no **method** of training which cannot fail.

Rather, God equips each Christian parent with the necessary abilities to train His children in His way.

And God promises His blessing on our truly godly efforts. As we walk in godliness, as we instruct His children, as we chasten and lead them, God's Word encourages:

"Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel." Let us be faithful and our faithful God will bless!

Consider reading "Peaceable Fruit" in connection with raising your children.

I know how difficult it is to persuade the world that God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word. The opposite persuasion which cleaves to them, being seated, as it were, in their very bones and marrow, is, that whatever they do has in itself sufficient sanction, provided it exhibits some kind of zeal for the honour of God. . . . Every addition to His Word, especially in this matter, is a lie. Mere "will-worship" is vanity. This is the decision, and when once the Judge has decided, it is not longer time to debate.

Calvin, **The Necessity of Reforming the Church**

Truth vs. Error

APOSTASY IN THE LAST DAYS
11. Apostate Heretics Perish as Blasphemers

by Rev. Robert C. Harbach

"But these speak evil of those things which they know not; but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." — Jude 10

The Translation. Some translations of the text fail to stress its particles and the antithesis they express. This must be brought out. In order to do this, and so, to some extent, clarify and balance out the text, we translate as follows.

> "These, however, on the one hand, whatever things they know not, they blaspheme; on the other, whatever they understand naturally, like the animals without reason, in connection with these things, they perish."

Here Jude in his own words repeats what Peter had written: "But these, as natural brute beasts (as natural animals without reason), made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption" (II Pet. 2:12).

Contrasts. In this verse Jude first in "but these" draws a contrast between the false brethren in the church and the archangel. He, indeed, earnestly contended for the faith, but in the modesty and humility befitting a holy angel. He did not take more upon himself than that which was right. He would not presume to "play God." But these others were contemptuous of whatever did not fit in with their supposedly all-embracive world-and-life view. They ranted and raved in ridicule against whatever they had no room for in their thimble-sized brains. Then next Jude makes an additional contrast between one and another of their faults. In effect Jude is saying, On the one hand, they are profanely proud of their ignorance; on the other hand, they wickedly abuse to their destruction whatever knowledge they do have.

Blasphemy. These in their irreverence do indeed "speak evil" (rail, v. 8, 10), but the word is stronger than that. They do no less than to blaspheme. They blaspheme "dominion" (lordship), and "glories," (God's, Christ's) divine attributes, and much more, in fact, whatever they do not know, that is, whatever does not come within the scope of their imagined comprehensive and supposedly exhaustive knowledge. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14). These natural men, not being spiritual men, have no spiritual understanding. They lack all spiritual sense. Spiritual things are

beyond them. What is beyond their ken they deny. "Whatever my net can't catch, ain't fish." In other words, whatever man's mind, which is assumed to be the measure of all things, does not comprehend, does not exist. "There ain't no such animal!" Bring spiritual things to their attention (heaven, for example) and they ridicule and scoff. Their swinish nature is to trample pearls under their feet. (Matt. 7:6). Now all this mockery and contempt is blasphemy.

On the other hand, whatever they do understand, they understand naturally, like the irrational animals that they are. It's not spiritual things, but what the natural (unspiritual) mind is capable of—natural things—these things they understand, for it only takes natural knowledge, not spiritual, to do that. Man since the fall has glimmerings of natural knowledge, which means that his natural knowledge (the only knowledge he has) is, at best, fragmentary. But this knowledge does leave him with some (natural, not spiritual) knowledge of God. (Rom. 1:20). He has a natural knowledge of natural things. For example, he knows the difference between good and evil. But this natural knowledge of natural things is insufficient to bring him to saving, spiritual knowledge of God or of God's creation. Furthermore, he cannot even use his knowledge rightly (he lacks wisdom, the ability to choose the most laudable ends, and the best means to accomplish them—Webster), because he also calumniates and curses "things natural and civil." He damns not only spiritual things, but also everything in the natural sphere. With his naturalistic (and so called "scientific") theory of evolution, he not only blasphemes God, but the highest "product of evolution," man. A wonder of "science", man is an advance on the ape-pattern. This cannot be said to be ordinary natural knowledge, but is that knowledge polluted and perverted. He always corrupts whatever belongs to the field of natural knowledge. For one thing, he totally divorces that field from any connection with God, it's Creator, and from God's interpretation of nature. That's blasphemy! In this way, all his natural knowledge he holds down in the unrighteousness of his own (evolutionary) interpretation of things. He "speaks against" the doctrine of creation. (I Pet. 3:16, Gk.). That, too, is blasphemy. By all this blasphemy of his he becomes inexcusable before God. He also goes to ruin, like the unbelieving Israelites, the rebel angels and the vile Sodomites. In connection with these natural things, since he has no connection with God, he perishes! For any man who has no more than a natural knowledge, who has no spiritual (knowledge) interpretation of all reality, he cannot make a right use of his knowledge, and so all his knowledge and thinking are profane. All that is left for him is ruin; he perishes.

Deniers. Jude here warns us against these apostates who "speak evil of things which they know not," or to put the text as strongly as it actually stands, they blaspheme whatever things they know not. They castigate the things they regard as unknowable; for instance, the Being of God and the matter of a revelation from God. They will not admit to any ignorance. They are men of science and philosophy who believe man capable of absolute comprehension of knowledge. Man can do anything he wants to do, go anywhere in the universe he wishes and know anything worth knowing. The Phari-

sees, as we mentioned, had contempt for the doctrine of angels. Such beings cannot possibly exist, have no place in their body of divinity, because they will not fit in with what they regard as the total sphere of reality. Some are so hardened against the ways of God as to stand against the institution of the church and the means of grace, giving no place to the preaching of the Word, nor to the administration of the sacraments. These are conceived as no more than subjective mental projections within one's individual meditations. Others speak reproachfully of the offices which God has set in the church, not knowing, or refusing to know who has a right to the office, who has right to rule in office, and wherein lies the source of authority for any office. Many use intemperate language in condemning civil government, revealing that they do not believe they have the responsibility of submission to the powers that be. Especially maintain two particular attributes of the church, namely, its **Christianity** and its ***holiness, and they*** will snarl and roar their disapproval. Hold uncompromisingly that Sodom is totally outside the church and absolutely must be kept out, and an insane wrath must be expected to flame out against anyone and any church taking such a stand. These apostates are incorrigibly obstinate in their ignorance. They refuse to know what they have a mind to hate. They are so desperately opposed to the truth that they will not face it nor receive its presentation to them. Since they will not have it, their hatred of the truth is without knowledge. They will not have it! they will not stand for it! Like the Dickens character, Mr. Podsnap, when it comes to the reality of anything they do not want to face, they will with a violent wave of their hand behind their back sweep it out of existence exclaiming, "It just can't be! I won't have it!" That's Podsnappery for you, and that's evil speaking of the realities they refuse to recognize. Christian Science is a graphic example of "Podsnappery." A little child falls to the concrete pavement to take a hard bump on the face. Its Christian Science mother merely looks back to call, "Oh, never mind! You're not hurt, so don't think you are!" (Science and Health . . .1922, p. 154f). So they not only hate the truth without knowledge, but against knowledge.

Heretics. In the apostles' day, "the word (doctrine) of the Cross" was accounted "foolishness," by the sophisticated Greeks, those who know least of it. Nero made the Christian religion illicit by his imperial interdict because he chose not to hear it. But when they of Caesar's household heard it, they could not hate it. They are the devil's dupes who, when God's Book is brought up, suspect rather than search, and condemn it out of ignorance. Romanists, Arminians and other errorists always have and still do speak evil of the truth of unconditional election. **They** hold that "faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election to glory, but are 'conditions' which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who **will** be fully elected. . ." The heretic-blasphemers who in ages past troubled the churches were the Jews, Mohammedans, some false Christians as Marcion, Manes, Sabellius, Arius, Pelagius, Arminius and many others justly condemned by the orthodox fathers. They had their complicated intricacies, their disguised, devious and

horribly offensive misrepresentations of the gospel which they continually charged against the Reformed churches.

Warning. The sound, orthodox, faithful churches must warn "calumniators. . .to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them (v. 10c, Gk., 'in connection with these things, they perish!') for bearing false witness against the Confessions (v. 10a, Gk., 'they blaspheme'). . .for distressing the consciences of the weak, and for laboring to render suspect (as heretics, RCH) the society of the truly faithful." (Conclusion to the Canons of Dordtrecht). For these enemies of the truth will on any pretext continue violently to assail and debase and degrade by slander the doctrine of the Reformed churches. "May Jesus Christ, the Son of God. . .shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine and endue the faithful minister of His Word with the Spirit of wisdom. . . ." (ibid.).

FAITH

by Mary Beth Lubbers

And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years. . .came behind him, and touched the border of his garment.
Luke 8:43 and 44

For the most elegant litany of all those who lived and died by faith, one only has to read Hebrews 11. Here, the apostle gives names to the Old Testament "cloud of witnesses" who by faith ran with patience the rigorous race set before them, some resisting sin even unto blood.

Abel. Enoch. Noah. Abraham (the great Old Testament hero of faith, which account takes up almost one-third of the chapter), and Sarah, his wife (given strength to conceive! What a comfort for all Israel's spiritual mothers). Isaac. Jacob. Joseph. Moses. Rahab. Gideon. Barak (how interesting -Barak, whom we consider weak-willed and lily-livered). Samson. Samson? (how difficult to find evidence of faith in his life. His judgeship appears to be all brawn and brashness. Were I writing Hebrews 11, Samson's godly parents might have been included on this list, but certainly not Samson). Jephthae. David. Samuel. The prophets.

Following this list of faith's heroes and the sterling examples of faith's discipline and endurance, comes that moving parenthetical phrase in verse 38, "(Of whom the world was not worthy:)" Just think of it—when you live out of faith, God says, "The world is not worthy of you." What a remarkable statement! From God's viewpoint, the simplest saint living out of the most elementary faith is too worthy for this world; he deserves (and will receive) better.

When we were children, we played certain games to hurry along loathsome chores—such as doing dishes. Sometimes we would name all the cars we could think of; sometimes all the cigarette brands we could name; at times, all the rivers we could list, and the like. When that dulled, we made up

quizzes. One time we decided to name the strongest thing in the world. Concrete. Diamonds. The North Wind (who can stand before His icy blasts?). Iron. Steel. Now, is there anything stronger than steel? We even speak of those with nerves of steel. My sister, desperate to come up with something stronger than steel and with the allotted time running out, blurted, "Love. Love is stronger than steel." Now the contest ran in a different vein. What is stronger than love? "Love is strong as death. . . Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:6 and 7). "Love covers a multitude of sins."

Undeniably, love is strong. But continue reading Hebrews 11 to discover the strength and power of faith. It can:

1. subdue kingdoms
2. bring about righteousness
3. obtain promises
4. stop the mouths of lions
5. quench fire
6. escape the edge of the sword
7. rout the army of the alien
8. receive dead ones to life again!
9. refuse deliverance from torture

And another scripture says that he that has the faith of a grain of mustard can move a mountain. I ask you, is there anything stronger than faith? To believe something, all appearances to the contrary; to have confidence in someone, sight unseen—that is power, that is strength, that is faith!

Many there were in Christ's day (and in ours!) who saw with their own eyes the miracles which He performed, who heard with their own ears the truths of which He spake, but turned their spiritual backs on the Saviour. They were not linked to Him with the unbreakable cord of faith. But there were others who feasted on His Word. They brought to Him their diseased, their lame, their blind, their devil-possessed—confident of His power to heal them. And still others (even, and especially, those outside the Jewish faith), did not even seek His physical presence to accomplish the miracle, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (Matthew 8:8). They were satisfied with the "crumbs which fell for the dogs from the master's table," and in so doing were assured that they would sit at Christ's great banquet table through all eternity.

Such confidence characterizes the unnamed woman whose story is recounted in three of the gospel narratives. But although unnamed, there is scarcely a person alive, be he Biblical scholar, lowly plowman, or hardened agnostic, who is not acquainted with the woman who touched the hem of Christ's garment.

* * * * * * *

She was poor. Very poor. It had not always been that way. Before her debilitating illness, she had enjoyed the simple comforts of this life. Nor did she begrudge the coins which had so swiftly slipped through her fingers in seeking treatment for her illness. If only she could get a grip on the good health which she so earnestly sought. For what are the goods of this world, money, houses, or land, compared with the simple gift of robust health? This woman had not known a day of good health for some twelve years now. And although she had visited doctor upon doctor, week in and week out, her disease steadily worsened.

At first she had paid for the expenses incurred in seeking medical

help out of her luxury. Gradually, however, she began denying herself certain comforts and pleasures to pay for the many and varied treatments she endured. At long last, she realized that she was seeking help at considerable sacrifice to her own financial welfare. And the day came when it struck her forcibly that she had spent **all** her living on doctors, no longer even owning her house or the plot of ground in the Galilean hamlet she had for so many years called home.

For twelve years she had sought a cure for her malady. During those years she had subjected herself to many remedies. Poultrices. Oils. Balms. Plasters. Herbs. She had even traveled far to effect a cure from a well-talked-of mineral bath. Amulets, however, the woman did not permit (although there were those in Israel who did), that being, in her mind, a practice of the heathen Amorites. Every remedy known to the physicians of her day, she had tried—and some more than once. Most of the treatments, however, were of an external nature since there was very little knowledge among the Hebrew doctors concerning internal medicine. The Hebrew practice of treating diseases was still in a very rudimentary state, as it is in primitive societies yet today

Some of the doctors, she was sure, were not even qualified to practice medicine, having had no medical education. Any lowly tradesman or farmer had only to grind an old knife blade into the shape of a lancet, bill himself as a doctor, and thus take up the healing art. How much she had squandered on these charlatans she would never really know. In her desperation to be healed, no price was too great, no doctor too humble. She remembered well the physician who had plainly told her after several sessions that her illness was out of the reach of human skill. She should plead upon the mercies of God. That was her only hope. There simply was no cure for her.

The trying years of failing health were indeed a great grief to her, but even more painful to the woman was the fact that for twelve years now, because she was ceremonially unclean, she had not been able to go up to God's House to worship Jehovah (Leviticus 15:25). She, a dedicated and zealous Jew, had not been able to enjoy the spiritual blessings of temple or synagogue because she was a bloody, hemorrhaging, unclean woman. Considered impure by levitical law, she could not worship with God's people. As she became grievously ill, how she longed for this communion with God. Now more than ever she needed the comfort, the solace, which God's House afforded. She was denied this. It was as if she had been excommunicated—perhaps unjustly—from the congregation of Jehovah. Like Job, she could not understand why she was cast off in this way, she could only lament, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me. . .for the hand of God hath touched me" (Job 19:21).

And now, like Job, her soul was weary of her life. Ravaged by her illness, spurned by human companions, ceremonially unfit for the House of God, she had but **one** hope, but how meager it seemed.

The woman had "heard of Jesus" (Mark 5:27). Her belief in Him was firm enough—that wasn't her meager hope—but rather, so many obstacles stood in her way to **reach** Him! It would be embarrassing enough to tell Him of

her ailments if she were alone with Him. But Jesus was always busy: He was never alone. The twelve disciples were always near His side, and multitudes followed Him at this time wherever He went. Then, too, the very nature of her illness, constant hemorrhaging, made it exceedingly difficult to talk to Him about such a thing. No, she lacked the temerity to speak of such matters to anyone, much less to Him! If she could only devise a way to furtively effect the cure. Her faith in Jesus was such that she thought to herself, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole" (Matthew 9:21). Just so I don't have to appeal to Him directly or expose my intimate female difficulties to Him or to the people thronging Him.

And so, she followed Jesus "in the press behind" and in the complete confidence of His wonder-working power reached out to touch the very lowest part of His garment—the hem. Immediately her faith was rewarded, for she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. But the Great Physician turned and looked directly upon her, crouching in the dust fearing and trembling, and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" And though the multitude swarmed Him and His own disciples scolded Him for asking such a mindless question, the woman understood the import of His question. Knowing that she was no longer hid, she knelt at His feet and told Him everything. She did not concern herself with multitudes, disciples, her embarrassing illness, the uncomfortable topic—nothing mattered any longer. She confessed all to Him, telling Him of all her fears, her pain, her sins, her miraculous healing. How silly to imagine that she could "sneak a cure" without Christ's knowledge; how foolish to assume that she could be restored to health without His divine will. But how strong was her faith in Him! And Jesus, the tender Physician, "touched with the feeling of all her infirmities," recognized her faith and acknowledged it—in front of all the masses that day, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. Be of good comfort."

We must note well: Christ says, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." He doesn't say, "I have made thee whole," or even, "The power which pervades my very clothing hath made thee whole."* Many people jostled Christ that day, and they were not healed nor were their sins forgiven. But to everyone who reaches out to Christ in faith, drawn by the efficacious power of His grace, to that one a complete and immediate cure is assured. The tower of sin which rises up in his life as a monolith of filth is completely and forever washed in the fountain of His blood.

In Luke 18:8 Jesus says, "When I return shall I find faith in the earth?" With the unclean woman we respond, "Yes, oh yes, and yes again." Great Physician, Balm of Gilead, Healer of the Nations, we need not, we dare not, even look up into your blessed face. Let us but touch the hem of your garment.

*In our eagerness to minimize any innate power in Christ's clothing, we must not do away with its importance altogether. Jesus **used** the border of His garment to heal the woman. See Acts 5 where the very shadow of Peter passing by healed the sick, and Acts 19:12 which teaches that handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from Paul's body to those with diseases and evil spirits to bring about healing.

OUR SPECIAL PLACE

by Mitch Dick

We have been studying what it means to seek the kingdom as the Bible in Luke 12 explains it. In the face of such an exhortation as "seek the kingdom" we need not despair, for we are able to do all such things through Christ Who strengthens us. We may not be proud, however, of our ability. For it is **only** through another, through God's Christ, our king, that we can begin to look and continue to look for this heavenly kingdom.

From the perch of Luke 12:35-37, gazing out over the vista of all Scripture, let us look more in detail at this idea of seeking the kingdom. From the start of our study we have wanted to know if we were indeed "ready" to seek. By faith in His most sure Word, I believe I am ready. Are you? Consider: (1) The kingdom of heaven (2) The seekers.

The Worth of the Kingdom

There is a king who is set upon His holy hill (Psalm 2:7). He is Jesus. He is king of all kings and the Lord of every lord of the earth. It is only by and at the will of this wise king that other kings and princes and nobles can rule and decree justice (Proverbs 8:15, 16). **The** king being Christ-The-Anointed-King, the king**dom** is also His. For the kingdom we are exhorted to seek in Luke 12 is the kingdom of **God**. And Jesus Christ, the One sent by God and set by God on His holy hill, is very God Himself. Right from the start then, we know that this kingdom is worth seeking. As the king is worthy, so is the kingdom worth all of our attention.

The Kingdom as the Rule of God

The word "kingdom" can refer to the domain, or territory of a king. The place where Christ the king rules is this: heaven and earth. God's kingdom is everywhere! Galaxies, stars, moons, trees, frogs, rocks, roses, boys, girls, pastors, teachers, heaven and earth, and even hell itself (for God is there in His wrath) belong to the domain of our God. And that He has such a large kingdom only bespeaks God's greatness.

But let us not dwell so much on where God dwells or where God's kingdom is. Rather, let us seekers think for a moment of God's kingdom as God's **rule** over everything in that kingdom. After all, this is most important. Someone **could** be a king and yet have no control over his subjects. But God is king, not to be compared to Queen Elizabeth or President Reagan: God rules and no parliament, no legislature, no voters or dissidents can overrule Him.

What most characterizes, therefore, the domain of a king is that he rules there. We can speak of a kingdom itself then as the rule or government of the king of a particular kingdom. So Scripture's kingdom is more than just a physical place. In fact the Bible would take our eyes almost away from the fact that God's kingdom is a place so that we might see, by faith, its spiritual

characteristics, its heavenly government. Thus we read that Jesus repeatedly calls His kingdom a **heavenly** kingdom. He did this much of the time to combat Jewish notions of a political kingdom soon to come in which an earthly lord would rule. "The kingdom cometh without observation", "it (the kingdom, MD) is within you", "thy kingdom come" are all words of our Saviour which would lead us to the **Ruler Ruling**. This is so that not only devils might be **spiritually** in subjection to the rule of God, but ourselves as well (ref. Mt. 12:28; Lk. 18:21ff).

God rules the kingdom, everywhere by His law. He has made laws for every creature. Fish must obey the laws of the rivers and lakes and seas. Eaglets were **made** to fly, but in some mysterious way must learn by watching their parents; and even the flying eagle is subject to the God of the winds. We humans, made of the dust, are subject to laws which God made for human creatures. We cannot fly. We walk, but only on our legs, not on our heads. We think much differently than other animals. This is because we have larger and altogether different brains. But for all our brains, we can never think up a way of eating with our elbows and not with our mouths!

So many laws and rules of the king: laws for individual creatures; laws for institutions like government, church, or home; laws for disciplines like science, art, business; laws for "natural" things from planets to peas to sub-atomic particles. No earthly king, scientist or businessman could have kept it all straight!

Besides all these laws, there is also a law for **sinners**. This is a law different from all other laws because in no way can we ever **begin** to keep it. This law is summed up for us in the law of the King Jesus: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Mt. 22:37-39)

The law which God wrote. . .for sinners. In fact the king's law entered that the offence of men might **abound**! (Rom. 5:20) We are sinners. God has shown us that we are outlaws in His kingdom. We can keep the law of walking upright and not on our heads. But we have broken and do break continually God's law of **love**. King Jesus, therefore, must **over**-rule our sin. He must come, take the sin of the church, and smash it to the ground. He must bear, in His kingly overrule of sin, the punishment of God for it, for us. He, the King, subjected Himself to the pain and darkness of hell. What a king, who would willingly let the enemy swarm in upon Him! What a king, who would seek no escape from His task, but who would trust that God's eternal counsel was good enough and sure enough to guarantee the victory! What a king! What a kingdom!

Can we see now a little bit more how it is not so much a "place" for which we seek as we seek the kingdom? Rather, God would have us seek to find our **special place** at the foot of the cross. God has revealed to us that there is a refuge for out-laws only in Jesus. By faith we begin to submit to His law of love. There by His cross we see salvation wrought for us by the king 2000 years ago. There also in our future eternity in heaven we see the Lamb slain. For there in that timeless and very "unearthly" place is the heavenly kingdom in which there is no

temple, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. 21:22).

This then is how we as redeemed sinners must see God's kingdom: it is God's righteous rule effected in perfect love and justice on the cross of Calvary. By the gift of the Spirit and by faith, this rule has mastery over us. And in all of this rule the king is glorified.

The Seekers

A Bible commentator, Alexander Maclaren, has aptly painted the scene of Luke 12:35-37:

> It is midnight, a great house is without its master, the lord of the palace is absent, but expected back, the servants are busy in preparation, each man with his robe tucked about his middle, in order that it may not interfere with his work, his lamp in his hand that he may see to go about his business and his eye ever turned to the entrance to catch the first sign of the coming of his master. Is that like your Christian life? (Vol. IX; pp 358, 359 of his Expositions of Scripture)

The Holy Spirit in Luke here has described for us **seekers** of God's kingdom. In the Bible there are many descriptions of people who seek the kingdom. Seekers of God, for example, are called meek, those who mourn, who are persecuted, who fear God, who are full of joy and the Holy Spirit. The emphasis here in Luke, however, is that what characterizes seekers is that they do watch and wait for that king and kingdom to come. This is very important for us to remember, especially for those of us without gray hair. For we young people would often just as soon **run** after God than wait for Him, trying really to "beat Him" to His own purpose and end. We in our youthful zeal would think we were doing God service when in fact we trip over our own works and forget about God's grace which alone saves us. On the other hand, sometimes the waiting for this great kingdom to come can seem so long (just like we might complain that the minister's prayers or sermons or family devotions are **so** long!) that it seems pointless. The temptation to be lazy or bored with watching and waiting for a spiritual king can be very, very real. We might just as soon watch the ball game. We might just as soon wait very prettily in our new dresses to catch the eye of anyone and everyone.

But true seekers of the kingdom, young or old, do wait for their Lord. They do this, as Maclaren describes and as Luke says, by girding their loins and burning their lights.

The loins are not spare ribs. They are simply the middle part of the human body, say, the part from the thighs to the stomach. To gird them about was, for those of Jesus' day and culture, to hitch up the long and flowing robes which people then wore around a belt or around the robe itself. A master, for example, might tell his servant to gird up his loins in order to carry that jar of water or send this message swiftly to his brother. By the words, "girding the loins", the servant would know exactly what his master was saying: "This job must be done quickly and efficiently, so make sure you are not tripping over your garments on the way." There are some interesting examples in Scripture of people girding up their loins.

Girding the loins meant for Gehazi, Elisha's servant, making haste to lay Elisha's staff upon the face of the dead son of the Shunammite woman. In this he must not be side-tracked, but he

must go about quickly the business of the prophet of God (II Kings 4). Jeremiah the prophet was one commanded by God to gird up his loins and to arise and speak unto apostate Judah (Jer. 1). At first Jeremiah would say that it was impossible for him to go for he was only a child (learn from this, young people!). But by faith and girding the loins, Jeremiah could speak the Word of God. Another example of one who so girded his loins in preparation for a task is the example of Jesus. He girded His loins about with a towel after the supper of the passover with His disciples. He did this in order to wipe with this towel His disciples' feet after he had washed them.

These examples of persons in the Bible girding up the loins have spiritual significance for us seekers. We do not have long flowing robes that get in our way. But we do have long flowing sins: we often put on such wild imaginations and lies that would trip us up and divert us in our pursuit of God's kingdom. The spiritual admonition for us as God's servants always is: gird up the loins of your **minds** (I Peter 1:13), and, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). We can not be as men who wait for their Lord if we can not and do not stand.

Letting our loins be girded spiritually and by faith in the God of the Bible we will surely be waiting on the Word and letting our lights burn. Light is the revelation of the glory of God. This glory shines. It shines and burns away the darkness of a world that hates God. God's glory, THE LIGHT, Jesus Christ, shines in the face of unbelief so that it cowers, like Old Testament Israel, before it (CF. Exodus 34:29-35). God's glory shines so that all can see—it can not be hid.

By faith, the gift of God, we do burn this light. Each of us does burn this light. We do this by setting our hearts on the kingdom. This act of faith ignites us to let our parents, our brothers and sisters and church members and classmates and the whole world know that we are Christians! We say: "Come see this kingdom we have found! We have set our hearts there, and our treasure is there. Our loins are girded, we have detached ourselves from all empty pleasures and faithless passions. We concentrate instead on our meat and drink: the Words of the kingdom of God's dear Son." Day by day reading and prayerful meditation upon the Bible; intent concentration in church and in school; building friendships which are true friendships in the Lord; applying, by faith, all that we read and hear and see of the kingdom . . .to our lives—these are the most important activities of our lives. Does your faith glow? If so, then you are telling yourself, the world, and God, that He is the Father and the power of all lights. If so, then you are truly burning your light. Then also you are truly waiting on God.

In all of this girding of our loins and letting of our lights burn we are said to be (verse 36) "like men that wait for their lord." Just remember this, if anything, about waiting: included in the Scriptural idea of waiting **for** is the idea of waiting **on**. We wait **for** (or can not wait for) trains, busses, dinner, vacation. We wait **on** the Lord. And this implies that He is already king, already come, ruling in our lives. Thus His coming and our waiting is not just in the future.

We wait **on** the Lord. This means that we attend God's law and so **serve**

God—now. You have seen waiters at restaurants, have you not? They wait **for** the time when you are ready to order. So we wait **for** God to complete His purpose in time and to take us home. But good restaurant waiters wait **on** their guests constantly from the beginning to the end of their meal: filling glasses, taking orders, asking how is the meal. So we who wait on God do not wait **until** we make confession of faith publicly in church before we start acting like Christians in private and before all to see. We do not wait **until** we feel good or until we are "zapped" into spiritual fervor in order to start searching the Scriptures daily. If we wait only **for** God we will never act **upon** faith. And if we never act upon faith, then it must be true that we never had faith. For faith gives waiters "to open unto" the Lord, to yield unto His commandment, immediately both now and when He shall come again. We wait on the Lord—now. For in so doing we become like Him Who sought and waited on us.

Are you and I seekers? are we waiters, servants of the Lord? If we are, and I believe we are, then it is not because we have taken piano lessons or because we can build a building or sing a solo. Nor is it because we get better grades in school than someone else. Nor are we waiters/servants/seekers of God because we are more pious than people who go to churches other than Protestant Reformed. No. We are waiters, servants and seekers because Jesus the King waited on, served and sought us first. Jesus, the Son of God, waited on us, taking upon Himself the form of a servant. And we see in the picture of our passage that seekers' reward shall be that the Lord Himself **shall** "gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (v. 37).

Jesus is king. As Maclaren puts it: in heaven He is girded with a towel of Sovereignty. But His is no longer a ministry of washing, for he (us) that is once washed by the Holy Spirit is washed every whit. Rather the Lamb-King in eternity doth serve the feast of salvation to the saints, "filling up every soul with love and with Himself." Dear reader, this is the great mystery of the kingdom: in God's kingdom as subjects of His LOVE, we are blessed forever by the king Who shall serve!

Remember: there is a kingdom of this world which opens wide its gates to us. There is **no** law, no rule in this kingdom—it is "to each his own" there. It is the lawlessness of basketball game after football game after party after rock beats after fashion after heroes after wealth and nest eggs and after delight only in things physical. Indeed, it is a kingdom with certain riches: laughter, rhythm, popularity, physical comfort, feelings of carefreeness and feelings of oneness with those who joy in seeking the same thing(s).

But I heard a seeker of God just the other day. He was at the lecture on "The Rapture" given in September by Rev. Van Overloop. Out of the blue he says: "You know I'd much rather be here than at a basketball game." We had just heard of the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As He ascended so we shall see Him descend, with glory and with power and great brightness to destroy all that is Anti-Christ (II Thessalonians 2:8). And when the KING comes then will the seekers know so well His rule in their

hearts that they will be totally enraptured by it.

Let us anticipate this coming of the king. Let us pray to God constantly and in every prayer we make: "Thy kingdom come". And let us act brilliantly, by faith preparing ourselves and setting ourselves apart for the wedding of the church and her husband which wedding will take place in the halls of the great eternal king's palace. We are "the called" according to God's purpose?" May we be so **ruled** not by praise of classmates, parents or preacher and not by our desires for meat and drink. For our joy **must** be, if God has so worked in us, to marvel at, and to spend as wise stewards, the riches of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17).

WHAT'S HAPPENING

by Nancy Van Baren

BIRTHS:
The Lord Blessed:
-Mr. and Mrs. Paul Scholten of Holland with a daughter, Heidi Lynn, on October 6.
-Mr. and Mrs. R. Boeve of Holland with a son, Tyson Scott.
-Mr. and Mrs. J. Van Uffelen of Holland with a daughter, Sarah Lynn.
-Mr. and Mrs. Karl Van Oostenbrugge of Hope (Walker) with a son, Bradley Karl.
-Mr. and Mrs. Art Boer of South Holland with a daughter, Bonnie Lynn.

CONFESSION OF FAITH:
-Mr. and Mrs. Todd De Meester, Daniel De Vries, Steven Langerak, and Carey Lewis all of Hope (Walker) made confession of their faith on October 12.
-Sara Besselsen, Paul Kamps, and Jeff Terpstra of Hope (Walker) made confession of their faith on November 16.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS:
-Hope (Walker) received the membership papers of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dykstra and one baptized child from First Church.
-Hope (Walker) has received the papers of Carey Lynn Lewis.
-The membership papers of Mark Woudenberg have been transferred from South Holland to Kalamazoo.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

What is prayer? 'Tis not mere words;
'Tis not the fluent flow of speech:
'Tis not the moving of the lips
That doth the great Creator reach—
'Tis more than this.

What is prayer? An essay read
From books to please the ears of men?
The counting of the rosary
With words said o'er and o'er again?
'Tis more than this.

'Tis not self righteous pleas of worth;
'Tis not the studied speech of art;
Nor is it vain and pompous show,
Nor lip thanks with a thankless heart—
'Tis more than this.

Then, what is prayer? The spirit's cry
Unto its Master and its Lord,
With words, without, it matters not,
The earnest plea is heaven heard—
This, this is prayer.

—C. W. Naylor