

KOINONIA KONNECTION

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THANKS, FRIEND!

Though we all feel rather self-sufficient at times and think ourselves sturdy and seaworthy vessels which may weather any storm we chance to encounter, yet we all, on occasions, feel the need of a friend. What a blessing it is to have friends. And surely none of us learns to truly appreciate them until we fall into straits and are helped and encouraged by our friends. In keeping with the metaphor we just used, our friends may compare with the tugboat, which is of invaluable use, not only in guiding the ship safely into harbor, but in retrieving the vessel which has been disabled at sea. Surely, the Lord knows our weaknesses and made provision for our troubles through our friends. "A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity." (Prov. 17:17)

There is another proverb which I wish to share with you which speaks of the divine blessing of friendship. In Prov. 27:9 we read, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel."

Solomon alludes to the dual nature of man; his sensory nature and his soulish nature. We are, to a great degree, ruled and governed by our senses. Much of our emotion and attitude is produced by our reaction to sensory perception. If we are physically ill, we often respond by mental depression and perhaps an irritable attitude. As the aspirin commercial says "Sure you have a headache; but don't take it out on the kids!" And, in like manner, any number of other unfavourable sensory conditions will produce unfavourable attitudes and emotions.

But on the other hand, when your senses are pleased, then you become a more pleasing person, as a rule. So Solomon says, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart." They do so, because ointment and perfume are pleasing to the senses.

To the ancient world, ointments and perfumes were valuable and costly and were often given as royal gifts. Ointments and perfumes spoke of excellence and favour. Listen as the spouse of Solomon's Song announces the arrival of Solomon's royal chariot: "Who is this coming out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the merchant's fragrant powders?" (3:6) In like fashion, Solomon spoke of the acceptableness of his spouse's love: "How fair is your love, my sister, my spouse! How much better than wine is your love, and the scent of your perfumes than all spices!"

In the proverb we have chosen for discussion, Solomon goes on to draw this comparison, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart, AND the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel." You see, our human nature is not controlled by our senses only, but also by the mind, or the soulish nature. Just as ointments and perfumes make us glad by pleasing our senses, so the fellowship of friends strengthens our minds, and our souls.

An encouraging word is not unlike a good medicine. As the medicine builds up the body, the encouragement builds up the mind. God said to Moses, "But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall

cause them to inherit the land which you will see.” (Deut. 3:28)

There is something refreshing and encouraging in pouring out our troubles and woes into the ear of a friend. That is good medicine for the soul. Solomon says that there is a “sweetness” which characterizes a man’s friend. Of what does this sweetness consist?

(1) A friend’s sweetness consists of FAITHFULNESS. We read previously that a friend loves at all times. We all have had experience with “fair weather friends,” and the man who has but one has one too many! But friends who remain with you through the pain, and promise their comfort and support, are precious as the gold of Ophir. We will find many who will rejoice with us, but few indeed to weep with us. (Rom. 12:15) Faithfulness may require an occasional rebuke, too, but even these are sweet when administered by the kindness of a faithful friend. (Prov. 27:6)

(2) A friend’s sweetness consists of SYMPATHY. There has never been a winter any colder than an unsympathetic heart. But Job said, “To him who is afflicted, kindness should be shown by his friend...” (Job 6:14) True sympathy carries its own comfort and salve. Job’s “friends” were “miserable comforters,” (16:2) because they dealt with his grief without sympathy. Sympathy doesn’t need to give long discourses or use carefully chosen words, but simply the warmth of the heart and hand, the kind look of the eyes, and the assuring presence of the sympathizer speak for themselves.

(3) A friend’s sweetness consists of HEARTY COUNSEL. The word “hearty” is a full word which bursts with meaning. This hearty counsel is intelligent counsel. Burdens have a way of distracting the mind, and we need friends who can give us sound, reasonable advice. Isaiah said, “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a

word in season to him who is weary.” (Isaiah 50:4) Rehoboam’s downfall resulted from failure to heed the intelligent counsel of his and his father’s friends. (1 Kings 12:1-20)

This hearty counsel is animating counsel. It gives us new energy and incentive. The writer to the Hebrews counsels the suffering to “...strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.” (Heb 12:12-13) How numerous the times when my own ministry was given new strength by the hearty counsel of a friend, and I am sure it has been so with you. Is not this hearty counsel like the whetstone which sharpens the blade to greater effectiveness? “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.” (Prov. 27:17)

This hearty counsel is sincere counsel; it is from the heart. It is counsel given, not for a fee, but for a friend - not because you have to, but because you want to. It is in sacrificial giving of himself that the friend is made rich. (Prov. 13:7) As the familiar picture depicts it: A small boy rides the back of a larger boy, both of them ragged and evidently poor. But the caption reads, in the words of the larger boy, “He’s not heavy; he’s my brother.”

“Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man’s friend gives delight by hearty counsel.” This is true friendship. What a blessing for man from the rich treasure of free and abundant grace! Should we then not learn to say “Thank you” not only to God, but to our friends as well? And while we learn to appreciate friends, shall we not also learn to be a friend? For “A man who has friends must himself be friendly...” (Prov 18:24)

Now, if all this is true of men, how much more true is it of our Saviour, Jesus Christ! Solomon

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FAMILIES IN FOCUS

MAN AND GOD IN RELATIONSHIP - PART 4



Let us begin with stating something that all Bible believing people can agree on. Those who are the saved people of God are called the church, the *ekklesia*, or called out ones. Hebrews 12:12 says that they are "the general assembly and the church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven." These are members of the covenant community. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Hebrews 8:10

God is the only one who knows infallibly who are His. "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His."" "But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

What remains to be answered is how it is that we can know whom the saved are and that we are among them. God does not answer this query by revealing the names of the elect. There is more than one reason for this. For one thing, because we are corrupted with sin and our minds blinded, we would get this revelation wrong as well. Secondly, those whom God saves, He saves through union to Christ, the second Adam. He is called the second Adam, because like Adam, He is a federal head. He is head of the people of God, who are His by the terms of the covenant of grace.

We need to be reminded that a covenant is a defined relationship. The covenant of grace is God's relating to His people on terms of His

grace, without their merit. The Westminster Larger Catechism summarises the teaching of scripture concerning who this covenant was made with. "The covenant of grace was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in Him all the elect as His seed." (L.C. Q. 31) God saves His people, who are the elect, by applying to them the covenant blessings which are theirs in Christ, that is, those blessings that He merited for them by His active and passive obedience. These blessings are stipulated in the defined covenant of grace. Now God has not revealed to us who the elect are. But what He has revealed to us are the terms of the covenant. They include the promised blessings and the nature of the covenant's administration. God has told us what His covenant people receive and how this covenant is administered while we are not privy to knowing who the elect are. So, who are the people of the covenant?

God evidently has made His covenant with all those who are united to Christ by faith. This faith, which is worked by the Holy Spirit, manifests itself through the display of the covenant blessings. These include a hating of sin and the loathing of oneself for his sin together with repentance of it, a faith in Christ which embraces Him as He is offered to the sinner in the gospel, and a consequent transformation of life rooted in thanksgiving for such grace. Where these and other graces are manifest, it is evident that that believer is a participant in the covenant relationship with God in Christ. Now the recipients of these covenant blessings also receive the witness of the Holy Spirit with their spirits that they are indeed the children of God and can be assured of this. The difficulty of this is that believers are often weak in their faith and those around

them are not privy to their hearts. Hence, hypocrites can make the same professions while not exercising any saving faith in Christ. So how do we know who are truly God's saved people? We do not, at least infallibly.

God saves His people by the covenant of grace and He defines them by the same covenant of grace. In the Old Testament God made 'His' covenant with Abraham and his Seed (Genesis 17:7 KJV). Paul interprets this 'Seed' as Christ (Galatians 3:16): He is the head and representative of His people. His people are counted as in Him. But in Genesis 17:9-14 we have an interesting arrangement that God gives to Abraham. Abraham is to administer the sign of this covenant to his descendants after him. "And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ... and My covenant shall be in your (plural) flesh for an everlasting covenant..." In other words, God's covenant of grace in Christ was given to Abraham, the father of believers, and to his natural seed. The covenant of grace is made with Christ, and administered to believers and their seed. Throughout the Old Testament administration of the covenant, this remained true. (See Deuteronomy 29:9-15; Ezekiel 16:21; etc.)

What about the administration of the new covenant? Is the new covenant administration more restrictive? Is it possible that we now have an administration that we are able to keep more purely, being finally able to discern who are the true people of God?

The reading of scripture reveals that there are differences in the administration of the covenant of grace between the old and new administrations of it. There is the difference of the identity of the people of God; they are no longer the Jewish nation but the disciples of Christ. Neither is the covenant restricted to the Jewish nation but it incorporates believers in Christ from every nation. The signs and seals of the covenant are changed, reflecting the superiority of the new covenant. There are some things that remain the same. The same salvation in Christ is communicated to the people of God. This salvation is received in the same way, by grace through faith. Interestingly enough, it is also administered in the same way. It is administered to believers and their seed.

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This should come as no surprise. Even in the Old Testament scriptures it was foretold that the new administration would still be to the people of God and their children. "As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them:

My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore." Isaiah 59:21 "They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me." Jeremiah 32:38-40 (See also Ezekiel 37:24-28) The new covenant with its attendant blessings would be made to the people of God AND their children.

(to be continued)

-Bill Kroesbergen

YOUTH'S CORNER

WHERE DID THEY LIVE?

Not all Bible people lived in houses. Match these people with the place they lived.

Lot	temple
Noah	among tombstones
Man with unclean Spirits	palace
Moses	garden
Adam and Eve	tent
John the Baptist	outside a rich man's gate
Lazarus	desert
Samuel	large boat

RIDES

People rode on animals and other things in Bible times. Match these riders with the vehicle they used.

Abraham's Servant	bed
Balaam	horses and chariots
Jesus	camel
Elijah	basket and rope
Paul	ass
Noah	colt
Moses	fiery chariot
The paralytic	ark
Pharoah's army	basket of bulrushes

BOOKS IN REVIEW

We live in an age of increasing ungodliness and lawlessness. It is no wonder when the church visible has jettisoned God's law from its worship. The law is being portrayed as something that stands in the way of fellowship with God. Yet, both the Old and New Testaments clearly affirm the law of God.

Moral Law
By Ernest Kevan
P&R Publishing

The author, in this book, does an excellent service to the church in clarifying the nature and function of the law given by God. He deals with questions of the relationship of law and gospel, law and the believer, law and good works, the law written on the heart, and Christ the end of the law. There is much more.

Though this is a scholarly work, it is brief (97 pages, 14 chapters). It is short and to the point and still thorough. It is evident that Ernest Kevan has an excellent grasp of the subject and that he has done much research. It is worth the effort read this book.

-Bill Kroesbergen



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

THE DOOR OPENS IN QUÉBEC

Bernard Westerveld, Jr. writes: Welcome to Québec City, home of the Reformed Church of St. Mark (l'Église réformée St-Marc)! On March 31, I became the pastor-evangelist of this church. My work is a joint undertaking of the Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC and the Reformed Church of Québec (l'Église réformée du Québec [ERQ]), in order that the gospel might be more widely proclaimed to the French-speaking Quebecers.

Let me take you through some of the history of this "Québec Project," as it has become known. There is a real mission field here on North American soil.

The distinctiveness of the French language and culture has created tension throughout Canadian history. Before the 1960s, Québec guarded its identity by identifying itself with the Roman Catholic Church. If you were a true Quebecer, you were a French-speaking Roman Catholic. The speakers of English were Protestants. You can well imagine the difficulty Protestants faced as they tried to plant churches in Québec.

But since the 1960s, things have changed dramatically. The sixties were restless years throughout North America, and especially in Québec. Because of the increasing abuse of power by the Roman Catholic hierarchy and because of a rising class of intellectual, liberal thinkers, Québec became secularized. This secularization had already been taking place throughout North America. What was unique about Québec was the speed with which the changes came. Within one or maybe two generations, the people turned their backs on the Church of Rome and embraced a political identity of language and nationalism. As one sociologist has noted, "The state replaced the

hierarchy [of the Roman Church], language replaced faith, and nationalism replaced religion." This radical shift has come to be known as "the Quiet Revolution."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN QUÉBEC

Québec, however, is much more than a hotbed of political foment. It is also a battleground for the kingdom of God! Despite the fact that French-speaking Quebecers have been predominantly Roman Catholic, the Lord has preserved for numerous generations a faithful remnant testifying to the sovereign grace of God.

The early witness of the gospel came through the Huguenots, the French Calvinists. When France first began to colonize New France in the sixteenth century—a colony that at one time included the watersheds of the St. Lawrence River, the Mississippi River, and Hudson Bay!—the Huguenots came in significant numbers. (One of our ERQ pastors is a twelfth-generation descendant of a Huguenot immigrant!)

Urged on by Roman Catholic cardinals and Jesuit monks, the king of France eventually banned the Huguenots from the colony. Some historians have asserted that if France had allowed a greater number of Reformed Christians to immigrate to New France, in all probability they would have resisted the British conquest of their territories. Just imagine the majority of North America being French-speaking Reformed!

The Lord, in his wisdom, had other plans. While the Church of Rome dominated New France, a Huguenot presence remained. In fact, after the British conquest of 1759, a British soldier wrote in his diary that a number of

French Protestants attended a Protestant worship service with the English soldiers!

In the Quebec Act of 1774, the British granted significant power to the Roman Catholic Church in what was then called Upper Canada. The Roman Catholic clergy became the primary preserver of French language, culture, and religion in its parishes, and exercised considerable political power and social influence. This dominance continued for nearly two hundred years. Although Protestants had freedom to worship, they suffered the persecution of exclusion by the Catholic majority.

In 1835 the first significant Protestant missionary effort was undertaken in Québec. The Lord sent missionary workers from the Swiss Missionary Society. They aimed to establish a French-speaking indigenous church, rather than French-speaking congregations in a predominantly English denomination.

Although the work was difficult and the converts were few, several churches were planted. In 1875 these churches were taken under the wing of the Presbyterian Church of Canada (PCC), and eventually as many as twenty-five churches were established. By the end of the nineteenth century, as much as one percent of the population had become Protestant.

This growth continued until 1912. But then the PCC devoted more of its energy and resources to western Canadian immigrants. Liberalism also began to infiltrate the church. The mission to Québec was neglected. Many French-speaking Protestants joined the larger English-speaking congregations, which in turn diminished their witness to the French-speaking Roman Catholics.

By 1975, only three French-speaking PCC congregations remained. Among these was the Reformed Church of St. Mark in Québec City.

CALLED TO QUÉBEC

So where does Ben Westerveld come into all this?

Well, let me keep my story short. As a Canadian, I had always viewed Québec in light of its political problems. The Lord changed all that.

During the referendum of 1995, when Québec nearly voted to separate from Canada, the Lord opened my eyes to see that it did not really matter if Québec stayed a part of Canada or separated. What mattered was not the kingdoms of men, but the kingdom of God. Will the people of Québec be a part of God's kingdom?

I prayed that night. I told the Lord that if he wanted me to preach the gospel of grace in Québec, I was ready to go.

Five and a half years later, after theological studies and French-language studies, the Lord has brought me to Québec City to preach the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He has given me a call to be the pastor-evangelist of the congregation of St. Mark in Québec City.

The Lord has not sent me alone. I knew that the work in Québec would require significant support. Yes, financial support would be needed. But more importantly, I understood that I would need wise guidance to plant churches, strong encouragement to persevere, and above all the constant prayers of many brothers and sisters, so that the kingdom may come in Québec.

I approached the Committee on Foreign Missions of the OPC to support this cause. They agreed to establish a Québec Project. In the providence of God, the OPC is now extending her hand to a sister church in Québec, so that here, too, the lost may be called to repentance. To be continued. Reprinted from New Horizons (June 2001)

THANKS, FRIEND!

(CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER)

said, "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Though he refers here to the friend who may be dearer and more faithful than even our blood-kin, yet is it not also a prophetic picture of Jesus Christ? "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me." (Psa. 27:10) What we have before mentioned as the characteristics of friends may all be given to Jesus Christ with many more besides. What faithfulness, what sympathy, what communion are their's who walk with Christ. "So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." (Exodus 33:11) Abraham was called the "friend of God." (James 2:23)

The love and friendship of God toward us cannot be measured or cultivated within the human heart. According to Roman 5:10, when we were enemies, not friends, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, Jesus

Christ. Christ Himself said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do whatever I command you." (John 15:13-14)

Without Christ, you may receive the comforts of friendship now, but to die without Christ is to die without friends. They cannot alleviate the sting of death - they cannot stand in judgment in your behalf. And for sure, there will be no friends nor friendship in hell, whither you go.

But behold now Jesus Christ. He is the Friend of sinners, outcasts, and the friendless. (Luke 15:1-2,7) He died for sinners (Rom. 5:6-8), the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

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Elders: Mr Barry Everts
1405 Seaton Road
RR#1 Cambridge, ON
N1R 5S2
(519) 623-8208
beverts@execulink.com

Mr Cope Jonkman
RR#1
Paris, ON
N3L 3E1
(519) 448-1068
cjonkman@execulink.com

Deacons: Mr Ray Halma
2310 5th Conc Rd W
RR#2 Branchton, ON
N0B 1L0
(519) 622-4389
rhalma000@sympatico.ca

Mr Evert Winkels
52 Selkirk Street
Cambridge, ON
N1S 1Z3
(519) 622-5745
ewinkels@sympatico.ca

GRACE COVENANT CHURCH

For Christ's Crown and Covenant
Services: Sundays at 11:15 am and 6:00 pm
(meeting at Knox Presbyterian Church, Sheffield)
P.O. Box 12-4
Sheffield, ON
L0R 1Z0
(519) 623-8208
email - gcc@execulink.com
web site - <http://www.execulink.com/~gcc/index.htm>