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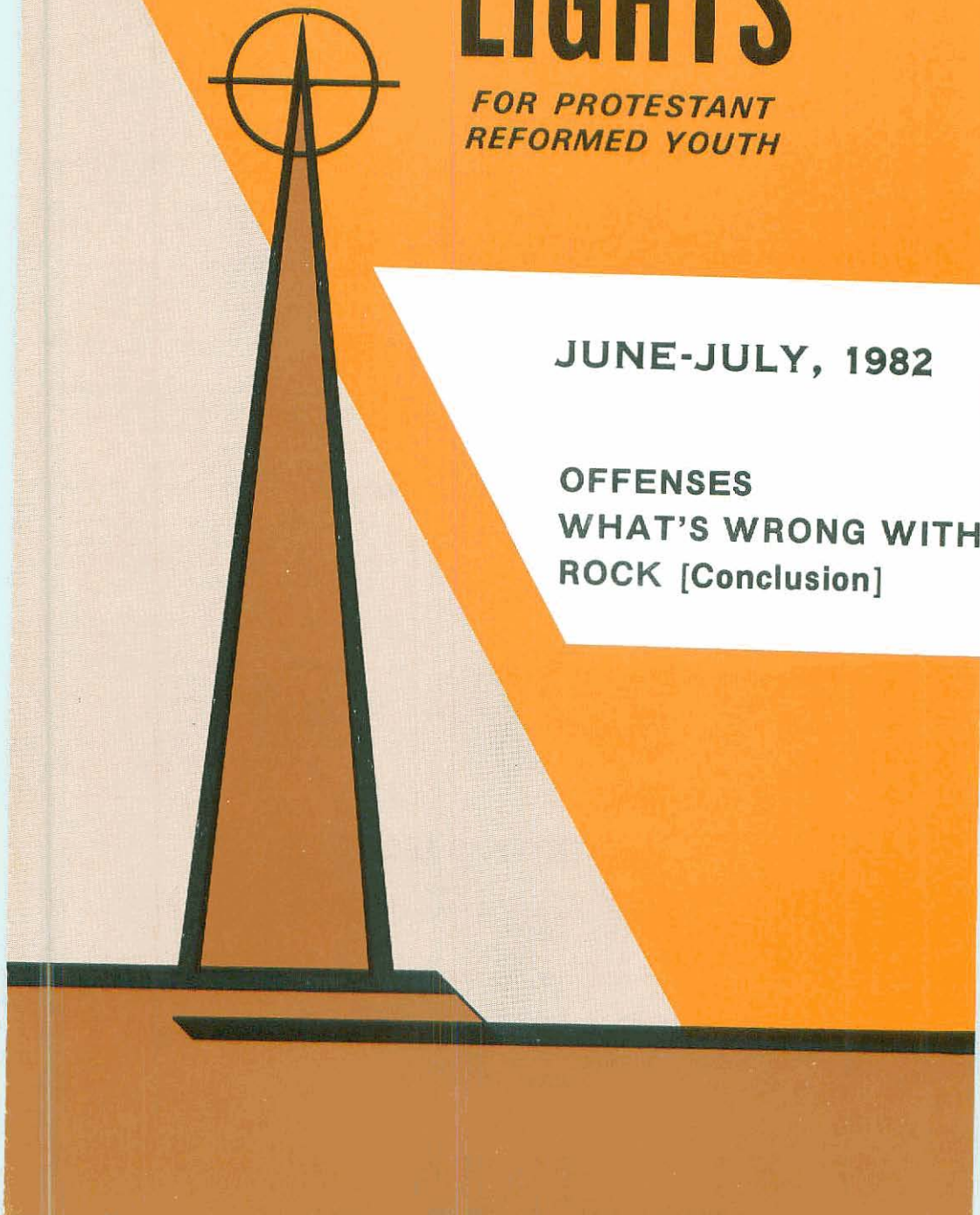

JUNE-JULY, 1982

OFFENSES

WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROCK [Conclusion]

BEACON LIGHTS

VOLUME XLI **JUNE-JULY, 1982** **NUMBER 6**

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Editorial

OFFENSES

by David Harbach

Jesus Christ, while on the earth as our suffering Saviour, made the truth known several times that the children of the promise were very important to Him, so important were they to Him, that if someone should offend the little children who believe in Him, the offender was in great danger of receiving a most terrible punishment. A brief explanation of Matthew 18:1-6 will provide us with the motivation to understand the great love Christ has for His people.

Jesus, after the disciples asked him the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom," knows the question arose out of pride and not a holy desire. Our carnal nature wants us to ask the same question, a question that the world asks itself as the world endeavors to reach the top of power. It is true that our depraved nature provides the way for us to want earthly importance, position, and power to rule over others. Often those beneath us are expendable as we advance to the top. This is especially seen when we rely on self-determination and self-ability apart from God's grace. "*I* can and will do it, and *I* will be first because *I* am the greatest." The greatest in the kingdom becomes a person who can say *I* have reached the top. The question is an important one to those who value self advancement along the ideals of Dale Carnegie. To bring the matter closer to us, consider the wicked heresy of common grace which at face value says that man has a will that is equal to God's will, the emphasis being placed on man's wanting to be first especially in regards to his own salvation. The person who wants to know who is the greatest in the kingdom has already forgotten Who is the greatest in the kingdom. When you forget that God is the greatest then you begin to think that in some way you have a part in your own salvation. Worldly men will always desire to be the determiners of their own destiny, the captains of their lives, and the greatest in all things. The disciples asked the same sort of question and Jesus must now teach them the truth.

The disciples had a human nature which inclined them to ask "Who is the greatest in the kingdom?" We, too, possess the same nature which means that we often out of sinful pride seek personal gain in the kingdom and then Christ must also come to us with the truth. Christ Jesus will bring words of wisdom to us that will strike at the very center of our sinful pride. Christ reveals to us, as only our King can, the terrible folly of our sinful thoughts and desires. To teach us the truth and to our utter amazement, Christ gathers a child to himself.

What importance does a child have in God's kingdom?

Surely, He does not mean to show us that a child is the greatest in the kingdom?

How could a child that knows so very little about the kingdom be the greatest in the kingdom?

Christ answers our questions not by saying that children are the greatest in the kingdom but by saying we must become as little children and must humble ourselves as a little child. As a child is totally dependent upon its parents for all things and more obviously upon God for all things, so we, too, must be dependent upon God for all things in life. Then we will seek His grace in order to obey His will, and then our question will be, "What will thou have me to do?" But this is not all that Christ wants us to see. We must understand the end result of our sinful thoughts. When we think of ourselves, then we forget others, usually the little children. The danger is that we neglect the little child who must be shown and taught the truth. The danger is that we may offend the little children that belong to Christ.

The offending of God's children by the world is easily understood from this passage in Matthew 18. In verse 7, Christ continues to emphasize the danger of offending by the exhortation "Woe to the world because of offenses!" Certainly the world of ungodly men is in danger of God's wrath because it does offend God's children. Whenever the world offends those who believe in Christ then the world is brought under severe judgment by God. Offending a person who belongs to Christ, who is redeemed by Christ, whose heart is regenerated, who has been sovereignly chosen by God to possess a place in God's eternal kingdom, must be the worst thing ungodly men can do, because in offending a child of God the world is offending God. Attempting to lead God's people away from Him is what the world does, and this offends God.

But we must remember that Christ is speaking to the disciples and underneath His warning to the world comes His even greater warning to us. We must not offend a child of God, we must not offend Christ! Certainly, Christ was admonishing the disciples because of their pride in wanting to know who is the greatest in the kingdom. Christ wants the disciples to know that in their pride they might think themselves too important to instruct little children or even the lowly, which would lead them to despise and show contempt for the lowly, and this would be an occasion for offense. But Christ wants us to realize that we, too, can commit the same offense when we lose sight of who the lowly belong to. They belong to Christ and therefore, the terrible crime would be that we would offend Christ. Notice, too, that the punishment for this crime is severe, and no wonder, for God's punishment justly meets the nature of the offense. You see, to make a molehill out of a mountain is terrible in regards to belittling people in God's kingdom. To take something of great importance and to belittle it is terrible. The offense is in taking something of seemingly no importance and treating it lightly, and also it can be in taking something of great importance and belittling it, over-looking it, offending it. Although the children who believe in God are seemingly small, lowly, and weak, Christ

treats them as being most important, so important that if they are offended, the punishment is of the most severe kind reserved for only the most atrocious crimes. The disciples were admonished and so are we. We must not offend God's children, we must not offend God!

But the question still remains, why are God's children so important to Him? In answering this question, I want to place special emphasis on the word "children", as that word means those who are very young. I put special emphasis on young children for two reasons. First, you know as parents that instruction of the covenant seed in the ways of Jehovah is a joyful and at the same time a difficult responsibility to fulfill. Apart from God's grace we can not and would not do the responsible thing. To offend a child of God is an easy thing to do, so easy that we may tend to think very little of offending a child of God. We might be indifferent to our evil way by thinking very little about the offense. But in the eyes of God our offense is greater because of who they are: young children of the covenant who hang on our every action and word, and because of who we are: adults who are responsible for teaching those children the ways of Jehovah, and because of who God is: our covenant God who realizes His covenant and who establishes His covenant with us and our children. Do we dare to treat lightly our obligation in God's covenant to instruct His children in His ways? Do we dare to ignore our offending them, the offense coming when we teach them ways that lead them away from God? God forbid! Instruction of the covenant seed is a blessed privilege and at the same time a serious obligation during which we can easily instruct our children to turn away from God. Secondly, God considers His children to be of great importance in His covenant, especially as this relates to the truth that God gathers, saves, His children, His church, in the line of continued generations.

At this point, I want to provide you with several quotes from various sources that speak about the importance of children. You will find them all very interesting, and they do shed a lot of light on the question under discussion: "Why are God's children so important to God and us?"

First of all, we need to know why we are called "Christians". The catechism teaches us in Lord's Day XII, answer 32, "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; that so I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life; and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures."

Secondly, we need to know why infants are to be baptized. The answer to this question is in Lord's Day XXVII, answer 74, "Yes: for since they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church; and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as was done in the old covenant or testament by circumcision, instead of which baptism is instituted in the new covenant." The ground for infant baptism is neatly given by Rev.

Herman Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*, page 686,

"1) That the children are included in the covenant and church of God.

2) That the promise of the covenant is for them as well as for the adult, that is, the promise of redemption and of the Holy Ghost.

3) That baptism as a sign of the covenant like circumcision, must therefore be applied to infants as well as adults."

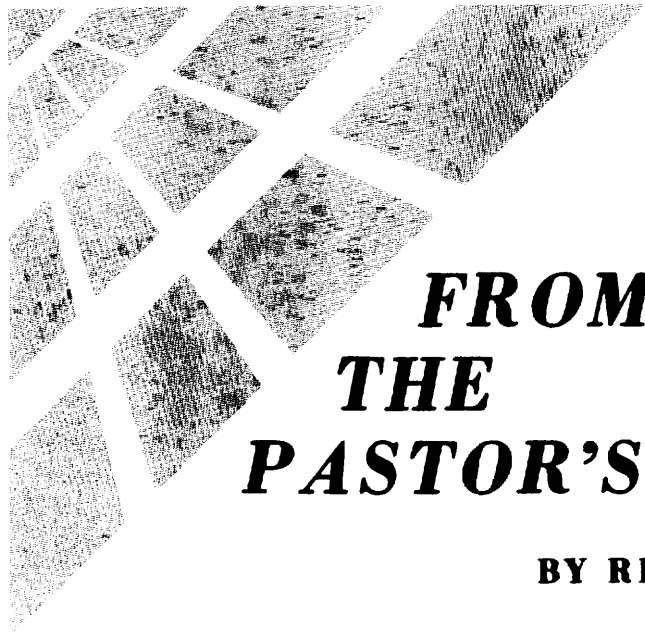
Thirdly, we need to know that the virtue of obedience is inculcated in the home. I provide a lengthy quote from Herman Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge*, volume 3, pages 292-293,

> "For this purpose the parents must look upon their children as principally sanctified in Christ, but nevertheless, as children that have only a small principle of the new obedience in their hearts. Certainly, they do not consider their children as principally good by nature. On the contrary, they confess with the Baptism Form that 'we with our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are children of wrath, insomuch that we cannot enter into the kingdom of God except we are born again.' On the other hand, they also confess that even as the children are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so they are received again unto grace in Christ. In the first question they are required to answer when their children are baptized, they 'acknowledge, that although our children are conceived and born in sin, and therefore are subject to all miseries, yea, to condemnation itself; yet that they are sanctified in Christ, and therefore as members of his church ought to be baptized.' They consider their children, therefore, indeed as saints in Christ Jesus, but very imperfect and sinful saints. And, it is the calling of the parents to instruct their little saints and to train them in the way of obedience. The children must learn to obey their parents in the Lord, and to respect and honor them and be in submission to them for Christ's sake."

Also, in regards to the obedience of children, there is one commandment specifically addressed to children by God. I quote from Herman Hanko's *We and Our Children,* pages 50-51, "But it is clear that, in the body of the commandments, there is one commandment which is addressed specifically to children. This is interesting and important. Every commandment is, of course, important for children too. Believing parents are always to instruct their children to keep the law of God in all its parts. But the fact remains that God considers children so important that He devotes one entire commandment to them. He says to children, and to them specifically, 'This is my injunction to you: Honor thy father and thy mother.' "

Finally, we need to know that only through prayer to God and dependence on His strength can we fulfill our obligations to God. Herman Hoeksema in his book *In the Sanctuary*, page 42, sums up the desire that we have in our hearts towards fulfilling our responsibilities, "We pray that, whenever our children receive their instruction, in the home or in the school or in the church, they may be nurtured in the fear and admonition of the Lord, so that they may become thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

At this point, my desire is to wait until the next time an article is due from me to finish this article. In the next article, I want to concentrate on the quotes that you have just read as they reflect on the importance of children to God.



FROM THE PASTOR'S STUDY

BY REV. G. LUBBERS

Seeking to be Pleasing to the Lord

"Wherefore we also make it our aim, whether at home or absent to be well-pleasing to him." II Corinthians 5:9

Paul was a great and faithful servant of Christ in the ministry of reconciliation. This ministry is so grand and exalted, that, no matter what the price is, he never faints in it and acts in a way unbecoming to his upward calling. He has only one desire in this life. For him to live is Christ and to die is gain. He cannot lose. What a giant in the faith was he. His conversion and salvation and calling, which is without repentance, is such that it is a pattern for all who will come to the faith. (Phil. 1:20-24; I Tim. 1:15,16) In Paul we see a great example of the grace of God, whereby all of life is a fulfilling of our "office and calling" here on earth, which is for Paul as faithful as the conduct of the angels in heaven, the elect angels who never left their habitation and grand estate as angels.

Paul had a great aim in life. He would be well-pleasing to his Lord who purchased him with His own blood, and separated him to the ministry of the Gospel. (Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:15) This great apostle to the Gentiles, who shall stand before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, and who has learned how many things he must suffer for Christ's sake, has *one* goal in life. In the arena of this world, and in this mortal body, where he will be accounted the off-scouring of this world, Paul will run the race; he will seek to be well-pleasing to his Lord. Yes, in this race he bears about the dying of the Lord Jesus in his body. (II Cor. 4:10) Thus Christ will be manifested in his mortal flesh. What a gladiator for Christ in the arena of life where he must fight against the human beasts in Ephesus and elsewhere.

But have no fear. Paul has his ups-and-downs alright. The treasure of the gospel is contained in the earthen vessel of his life, that the excellency of the power of salvation may be of God, and not of Paul at all. God's power is made perfect in Paul's weakness. His grace is sufficient. That Paul has learned. And he has learned to be content in whatsoever state he is. He can do all things through Christ Jesus. Paul writes here of his strong and hearty resolution to make it his life's aim to be well-pleasing to the Lord in his Gospel ministry. Evil and unreasonable men may think him beside himself, a mental freak, but Paul is beside himself in the Lord. (II Cor. 5:13)

The term he used in the Greek, which is translated in the *American Version* by "we make it our aim", is very difficult to render in English. The *KJV* translates "we labour". Now the term "labour" suggests great and arduous tasks requiring much strength of faith and prayer. The former translation attempts to give back the sense of the verb in the Greek which means: a great love for honor in excelling in the performance of duty. Amongst the Greeks the term meant the mere honor of men and of country. God was not in their thoughts. Here it is a striving for the honor which will follow, first of all, in the glory of the work performed, and then, too, the honor of hearing one day: thou wert faithful in little, I will place you over much. Enter into the joy of thy Lord. (Matt. 25:21)

Now Paul has real purpose in life. He knows that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he will have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And this will be a pure gift of grace, and yet, at the same time, it will be a reward of faithful service, of having been a man, in whom what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, this suffering is filled up in his body. (Col. 1:24) This he does for the sake of the church, the body of Christ.

He always lives with his face toward, in relationship to the Lord. In his being absent from the heavenly glory he is still with the Lord in faith; he walks not by sight but by faith. (II Cor. 5:7) And when he leaves this body he will be at home with the Lord. And, therefore, he makes it his aim, he is making it a matter of honor to please God. And he has a passion for preaching the gospel, to be made manifest in the consciences of men as one who is a minister of Christ, his Lord. This is made manifest in the consciences of the Corinthian

saints. He opens his heart wide to them; his heart is enlarged to them. He pours out all his soul to them. Such is his great apology of the Gospel which he preaches.

Paul sees the day of Christ's judgment in the offing! It will truly be a great day for all the faithful children of God. It will not be the great and dreadful Day of the Lord for them, which needs fill their hearts with cold fear. For when they see Jesus coming with clouds they will see him who showed his hands and his side to the church on Resurrection Day evening and said: peace be unto you. (John 20:19,20) Even as then we shall be glad to see the Lord. Does not the entire church, the Spirit and the Bride pray fervently: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly!" And when we see the great events in history transpire, do we not heed Jesus' words: "Lift up your heads, for your redemption is nigh?"

But Paul will impress on the consciences of these Corinthians that they must walk in the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, and work out their salvation with fear and trembling. And so he says we all must appear before the judgment seat of Christ! Yes, then we shall receive the things done in the body, whether good or evil.

This is a "must" of God. God who will not neglect to reward the good deeds of his saints, (Heb. 6:10) will surely need to reward the righteous with honor and glory. Yes, those who professed the faith, but who did not walk in the good works of gratitude at all, will be banished from God's sight. But the judging of the saints is a must. They shall all stand before the great white throne in their white robes, in their resurrection bodies. They must receive their crowns of victory in the sight of angels, devils, and evil men.

And Paul makes it his aim thus to run the race.

Must we not as young people also thus run the race, not as if we had already attained, or were already made perfect, but forget the things which are behind, and reach out for the things before, for the prize of the upward calling in Christ Jesus.

Yes, some of you are graduating from high school and some from college. It is Commencement Day! It is the day when the gun-sound will be heard, and we must go forth in our places in life, and find our office and calling, and then be as faithful as the angels are in heaven in their office, and all the elect in glory, the church of the first-born in heaven.

Yes, then we pray: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Come, Lord Jesus, thou Christ, the very same one who has shed thy precious blood for us at Calvary, and who hath ever lived to intercede for us before the face of God; yea, come to judge us and to avenge us speedily of all our enemies, taking us to glory and casting thine and our enemies into everlasting damnation.

Come, Lord Jesus, yea come quickly.

Amen!

Convention Discussion Outlines

Private Devotions

by Rev. Ronald Cammenga

Introduction:

A. Do prayer and the reading of the Scriptures occupy an important place in our lives as young Christians?
   1. Are we accustomed to do these things in family devotions, at school, in the Church, at Bible study societies?
   2. Is it wrong that we are accustomed to pray and read the Scriptures in all of these various places and at all of these various times?
   3. Is there a danger that prayer and Scripture study become ONLY a custom? Do we take these many opportunities for granted very often?

B. Besides all of the opportunities for prayer and the reading and study of the Scriptures with others, are private devotions necessary?
   1. Do we have private devotions every day? If not every day, why not every day? How often do we have them?
   2. Do the Scriptures in any way lay upon us the obligation for regular private devotions?
   3. Ought we to be in the habit of setting aside a portion of each day, and in seclusion having our own private devotions.?

I. How do the Scriptures imply that we ought to have regular private devotions? From what Scripture passages may we deduce this practice?
   A. Are there Scripture passages, first of all, which urge prayer upon the child of God?
      1. Look up and consider: Luke 18:1; 21:36; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; I Thes. 5:17, 18; I Tim. 2:8.
      2. If the clear teaching of Scripture is that the child of God must be always, continually in prayer, is it not reasonable to conclude that we ought also to pray privately?
      3. What other passages can you find in Scripture which emphasize our calling to pray?
   B. Secondly, are there Scripture passages which urge Bible reading and study upon the child of God?
      1. Look up and consider: Deut. 6:6, 7; Ps. 119:97, 98; Is. 34:16; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; II Tim. 2:15.

2. If the clear injunction of Scripture is that we must always be studying, reading, and searching the Scriptures, is it not reasonable to conclude from this that we ought also to be doing this privately, as individuals?
3. What other passages of Scripture can you find which emphasize our calling to read and study God's Word?

C. Thirdly, are there Scriptural examples and passages which rather clearly teach the duty of private, personal devotions?
1. Does Jesus leave us an example in this regard? Cf. Luke 6:12 and Matt. 14:23.
   a. Why would the sinless Son of God find private devotions necessary?
   b. Is there an even greater necessity for private devotions in our lives?
2. What does Dan. 6:10 teach concerning Daniel?
   a. Did Daniel have private devotions?
   b. Is there any indication in this text that Daniel was in the habit of having private devotions?
3. What does Jesus teach concerning private devotions in Matt. 6:5, 6?
4. Do the following passages say any thing about private devotions: Ps. 55:17; 63:6; Is. 38:2, 3; 26:9; Acts 10:9; Gen. 4:26?

II. Granted that God in His Word requires private devotions of the child of God, what is to be the nature of these private devotions? In what are they to consist?

A. In the first place, these are to be private "devotions".
1. What is the meaning of the word "devotion"? Why speak of private "devotions"?
   a. Does the word "devotion" imply "love"?
   b. For whom would this love be?
   c. Why and how is love for God the foundation for private devotions?
2. But private devotions imply more than the love of God in our hearts; implied also is that love of the heart comes to concrete expression in worship of God.
   a. Are our private devotions an act of the worship of God?
   b. How are our private devotions an act of the worship of God?
   c. What does Heidelberg Catechism, Q.A. 94 teach concerning the worship of God that applies to private devotions?
3. Specifically, these devotions will consist primarily of prayer and Scripture reading and meditation.
   a. Do we know the requirements of true prayer? Cf. Heidelberg Catechism, Q.A. 117.
   b. Do we know why we ought to pray? What elements belong to true prayer; for what ought we to pray?

c. Why should we read and study God's Word? Is it only a question of benefit for ourselves?
d. What do the Scriptures mean by "meditation"?

B. Secondly, it is to be emphasized that these devotions are "private" devotions.
1. Why are "private" devotions necessary besides family devotions and the study of God's Word and prayer in the Church, societies, and school?
a. Are there personal sins for which we need to pray for forgiveness and the grace of the Holy Spirit in our lives in order to resist?
b. Are there personal needs which we have which we as individuals ought to be bringing to God's throne of grace?
c. Are there personal reasons for thanksgiving to God?
2. Is there, nevertheless, a relationship between private devotions and the other times and opportunities for prayer and the study of God's Word?
a. Is it conceivable, for example, that someone will neglect participation in family devotions and yet be faithful in private devotions?
b. Are family devotions, the worship of God in Church etc. preparation for private devotions and training grounds for private devotions?

III. Some practical considerations for conducting our private devotions.
A. Ought there to be freedom and flexibility in carrying on private devotions? Why or why not?
1. Do the circumstances in each person's life make a difference?
2. Is one time of day or one particular method more suitable to one individual than to another?

B. Though we ought to avoid laying down hard and fast rules, there are certainly some practical considerations which we ought to take into account in private devotions.
1. Is it important that a certain time and a certain place each day be set aside for private devotions?
2. Should we be reading the Bible itself for our devotions, or are the writings of good Christian and Reformed authors also to be read?
3. Of what use can a concordance and Bible dictionary be made in our private devotions? What are these reference tools and should a young person invest in them?
4. In our Bible reading for our private devotions, should we stick to the King James Version of the Bible? Why or why not?
5. Are there ways in which we might improve our own private devotions?
6. How much time should we give to these private devotions? Should we set aside more time than we do for these devotions?

Modern Day Forms of Idolatry

by Rev. M. Kamps

I. What is Idolatry?
   A. Idolatry is to worship someone or something other than the one true God. (Cf. H.C. L.D. 34)
      1. Who is the one true God and how do we know him?
         a. His identity
            1/ He is Jehovah, the God of Israel in all ages.
            2/ He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
            3/ He is our savior and our sovereign covenant friend.
            4/ He is the righteous judge of men and angels.
         b. We know Him by His own revelation to us.
            1/ Jehovah has made Himself known as the Savior and Redeemer in Christ Jesus to Israel.
               a/ Centrally this revelation is through Christ Jesus.
               b/ But He has also made Himself known through His saving wonders, His works, in the Old Dispensation.
               c/ We, the believers, know Him through things created by Him and through His Son.
            2/ The Bible is the divinely inspired and, therefore, infallible record of this self revelation.
      2. The sin of idolatry is:
         a. The rejection of God by the sinner.
            1/ Negatively
               a/ Idolatry is not something done in ignorance. Rom. 1:18-20
               b/ Idolatry is not the worship of something in addition to the worship of God Jehovah. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Ye cannot serve two masters.
            2/ Positively
               a/ Idolatry is the rejection of Jehovah as God and God alone.
               b/ Idolatry is to worship another, someone or something, in the place of Jehovah and as God.
         b. This worship of idolatry is:
            1/ Is not merely the overt form of idol worship as found today among pagan peoples. (Ex. Singapore)
            2/ Idolatrous worship is to place our trust or confidence in anything or someone other than Jehovah.

B. The sin of Idolatry in the Church of the Old Dispensation.
   1. Some examples
      a. The period of the judges.
         1/ Judges 2:10-13 (Please read)
         2/ The people served Baal and Ashtaroth
      b. The period of the Kings.
         1/ Idolatry among the ten tribes occasioned by Israel's rejection of the house of David, Christ, and the establishing of images in Dan and Bethel. (I Kings 12:25-33)
         2/ Idolatry among the ten tribes as the consequence of image worship. The worship of Baal in days of Ahab. I Kings 17-19
         3/ Idolatry in Judah
            a/ In the days of King Manasseh
               1/ II Kings 21:15-16
               2/ The worship of Molech and the sacrificing of the children to this god of the heathen.
            b/ The pervasive idolatry in Judah and the rejection of God's prophets at the end of the Kingdom of Judah II Chron. 26:11-16.
   2. What do we learn from this history of the Church in O.D.
      a. This history is for our instruction and warning.
      b. We learn among other things:
         1/ That the church in the world is ever an apostatizing church. She is a self-corrupting church.
         2/ That man is by nature prone to idolatry. By nature we are idolaters.

II. The Modern Forms
   A. Men today have their gods in our post Christian western culture.
      1. Their identification
         a. The gods of materialism
            1/ Men place their trust in possessions, wealth, in things.
            2/ Ultimate happiness, blessedness is had if one has his dream house, his limousine or sports car, or his yacht.
         b. The gods of hedonism
            1/ The worship of self and the absolute refusal to be self-denying and self-sacrificing.
               a/ One's ease and relaxation is above all important.
               b/ One's pleasure and self-enjoyment is the goal of life.
         c. The gods of the American sports world
            1/ The "star" and heroes of football, baseball, and basketball are the authoritative guides and examples unto today's youth.
            2/ I have read and heard men speak of these sports figures as "gods," have you?
            3/ Little children are told to pattern their life after this or that

sports hero.

d. The gods of Scientism
   1/ The omniscient scientist is the great god of our day.
   1/ The world of science is viewed as possessing the powers to bring society to the longed for utopia.
   3/ Men in the church without hesitancy accept as gospel truth every pronouncement of the scientific community.
   4/ Is the space program of our country a powerful means to promote the cause of the worship of the man of science? Are there other wonders to draw our attention and devotion away from God and Christ Jesus?

2. The fact that people today place their trust in these gods for salvation and blessedness.
   a. This salvation and blessedness is:
      1/ Not the deliverance from sin and guilt before God. Our society has no consciousness of sin *as sin*.
      2/ Rather it is salvation from the effects of sin. Man will live in sin but would escape the certain, just, punishment of their sin in this life. What are the consequences of sin?
   b. The gods will bring salvation if diligently served.

B. The Idolatry of false doctrine in the church today.
   1. False doctrine is to present another god and another christ than the God and Christ of Scripture.
      a. Man made images of God which leads to idolatry
         1/ Images of the mind. Mental conceptions.
         2/ Images formed by false doctrine.
      b. False doctrine represents departure from or corruption of Scripture as the infallible record of divine revelation.
         1/ Departure from Scripture is false doctrine about man, creation, God, and Christ Jesus in His person and work.
         2/ Thus false doctrine is idolatry.
   2. Note the joining together or association of the gods of our society and the false-Christs of the apostatizing church.
      a. The apostatizing church and parachurch groups attempt to gain adherents to their false christ through the gods of this world.
         1/ Exceptionally gifted sports heroes are asked to promote Jesus to the young.
         2/ The rich, successful business man is used to make a case for Jesus as the one who can give you wealth and happiness.
      b. Biblical Christianity is found to be at odds with 20th century science; thus Scripture's authoritative words must be limited to the sphere of redemption exclusively.
      c. Can you explain why the apostatizing church today seeks the assistance of the gods of society to win adherents to their Christ?

1/ Suggested answers:
a/ Their false Christ of non-irresistable grace needs the persuasive powers of the gods of the sports world.
b/ The false Christ of the apostate church needs the attractiveness and alluring powers of the gods of materialism.
c/ Their false Christ is weak and unable to save by the Word.
2/ Your suggested answers are?

III. OUR Calling
A. To Know the Scripture whereby we are able to identify and reject the idolatrous forms of worship in our modern society.
B. To Worship God in Christ Jesus according to His Word.
1. To worship God according to the standard of His self revelation.
2. The Purpose:
a. To God's glory
b. To our salvation

Confession of Faith

by Rev. J. Slopsema

A. What is confession of faith?
1. What is faith?
a. According to the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 7) faith is a "certain knowledge whereby I hold for truth all that God has revealed to us in His Word".
1. This implies two things:
a. Faith is *knowledge* of God's Word.
1. A person who does not know the truth of God's Word can not be said to possess faith.
2. Where is the truth of God's Word faithfully summarized for us?
b. Faith is *acceptance* of the Word of God as truth.

1. Do you believe all that is taught in the Bible?
2. Do you believe that our churches faithfully teach the Word of God?

2. This knowledge of faith is more than an intellectual knowledge but also a spiritual knowledge. It is not just a matter of the head but also of a heart which has been born again (Romans 10:9, 10).
   a. Thus, for example, faith causes a person not only to accept the existance of God as revealed in the Bible but also to love that God.
   b. Carrying this principle through:
      1. When the Bible speaks of sin, what will that attitude of faith be toward sin?
      2. When the Bible sets forth the law, what will the attitude of faith be toward that law?
      3. When the Bible speaks of salvation in Christ, what will the attitude of faith be towards that salvation?

b. According to the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 7) faith is also an assured confidence.
   1. What is this confidence?
   2. What relation does this confidence have to the knowledge of faith? Can you have this confidence without the knowledge?
   3. Do you possess this confidence?

2. What is *confession* of this faith?
   a. It is sometimes called "confession" and other times called "profession" of faith.
      1. "Confession" has the idea of acknowledging along with (con) the church.
      2. "Profession" has the idea of acknowledging before (pro) the church and the world.
   b. What specifically do we acknowledge or proclaim when we confess or profess our faith? (confer the question asked at the time of confession of faith found in the back of the Psalter, page 59)
      1. Do we simply confess that we have faith?
      2. Do we say anything about our intention and ability to walk in the way of faith?

B. When is a person ready to make confession of faith?
   1. A person is not necessarily ready to confess his faith when he first comes to the consciousness of faith.
      a. When does an elect child of God born in the sphere of the covenant (i.e. of believing parents) normally receive faith?
      b. When does such an elect child of God normally become conscious of his faith so that it is an active power within him?
      c. Is such a person at this point able to make the promises required at the time of confession of faith? (confer again the back of the Psalter.)

Is he able to come to the Lord's Table properly?

2. A person is ready to make confession of faith when he has a mature faith.
   a. Faith like any other gift of God is something in which we grow, develop, mature. Thus, for example, the gift of singing, speaking, patience, meekness, etc.
   b. At what point is a person mature in faith?
      1. Does this imply a certain level of knowledge of the Scriptures and the creeds? If so, what level?
      2. Is a person mature in faith if he has reservations about the teachings of the Bible or creeds?
      3. Can a person make confession of faith if he is living in a particular sin or cherishes certain sins in his life?
      4. Is there any age at which a person matures in his faith?

C. The importance of making confession of faith?
   1. What does Romans 10:9, 10 have to say about the importance of confessing our faith?
   2. Through confession of faith a person becomes a member in full standing in the church.
      a. This implies among other things:
         1. The privilege of using the sacraments: coming to the Lord's Table, having one's childrens baptized.
         2. For the male member, the privilege of:
            a. exercizing the office of believer at the congregational meetings.
            b. being eligible to be on the consistory.
      b. How important are these?
         1. How important is it to make full use of the sacraments as soon as possible?
         2. How important is it that as soon as possible young men attend the congregational meetings and are eligible for a place on the consistory?
   3. Is it proper for a consistory eventually to erase a person from the church or exercise Christian discipline on a member who fails to make confession of faith?

D. How can we make ourselves ready for confession of faith?
   1. God uses means to strengthen and mature us in faith.
      a. What does God use primarily to accomplish this, sometimes called the chief means of grace?
      b. How do prayer, Bible study, society life, catechism, fellowship of the saints fit here?
   2. We prepare ourselves spiritually to make confession of faith by making diligent use of these means. Do we?

VII. Conclusion

by Terri Garvelink

What we set out to do in this series of articles was to answer the question, What is wrong with rock music? You young people have heard rock and roll blasted from various sources — your parents, the pulpit, your teachers; the more well-informed and well-read among you are aware that even many non-Christian sources have roundly condemned and warned against this music. But there does appear to be some confusion, difference of opinion and even plain ignorance as to what it is about rock and roll that makes it so wrong, and why; some have said it is the lyrics, some that it is primarily the beat, and some have said that it is not so much the music, but the performers. And so, in our introduction to the subject we promised to consider the various aspects of rock so that we might know better what rock music is all about. We need to be very clear on this point; it is not only relevant but *urgent* that you and I know the answer to the question we posed.

First, we would like to briefly summarize the main points.

The TERM: originates from the ghetto and refers to fornication.

The ORIGIN: the line runs basically from pagan African tribal music to jazz — in particular the blues and boogie woogie — leading up to rhythm and blues, and country music. It is significant that of all that the American Negro and his music have produced, it is the most simplistic, the most raucous, the most raunchy form that turned into rock 'n' roll. Rhythm and blues (R&B) is music which even many blacks have tended to look upon as disreputable, especially the better-educated, middle and upper class and the Christian blacks. There have, in fact, been Negro R&B singers who themselves called R&B "the devil's music" and "sinful music".

It was around 1950 that whites started buying and playing black R&B music; becoming aware of this, disc jockey Alan Freed started playing it on his radio show and because he felt there was a racial stigma to the term rhythm and blues, he (very aptly) dubbed the music "rock 'n' roll". With a little

hillbilly music tossed in we had one of the earliest forms of rock 'n' roll: rockabilly.

The BEAT: The most striking similarity between rock music and pagan African tribal music is to be found in the fact that the dominating factor of both is rhythm and syncopation.

Comments from some Christian sources on the beat:

"Purposely designed to appeal to the sexual nature of the human body." Tom Allen

"a heavy, incessant, throbbing beat, the same beat that people in primitive cultures use in their demonic rites and dances." Lowell Hart

"numbs the senses and induces a state of oblivion, ... compels the shedding of inhibition, ... immerses the listener in a physically sensuous experience." Bob Larson

Comments from secular (non-Christian) sources:

"Rock music is sex. The big beat matches the body's rhythms." Frank Zappa.

"Rock music is sex and you have to hit teenagers in the face with it". Rock singer.

"brute - sexual rhythm"; "rhythmic orgasm" Time magazine

"What was new about it (rock 'n' roll) was its aggression, its sexuality, its sheer noise and most of this came from the beat." Nik Cohn

The LYRICS: From sentimental romanticism to raunchy hedonism: thus we could briefly describe the transition from pre-1950 pop to post-1950 rock.

Comments from Christian sources:

(Rock) "Lyrics ridicule religion and make a mockery of that which is sacred, ... glorify promiscuous sex and invite immediate and complete physical and emotional self-indulgence, ... promote hallucinogenic drugs and advocate the supposed euphoria of marijuana, ... rebellion against all civil and moral authority." Bob Larson

"shocking examples of words which are clearly pornographic ... the worst of the words the author considers far too shocking even to print." Rev. G. Van Baren.

"five major themes: sex, drugs, rebellion, false religion (usually Eastern) and devils." Tom Allen

"drugs, promiscuity and revolution; perversion of the basest sort." Rev. R. Allen

Comments from non-Christian sources:

"an open endorsement of sex permissiveness, perversion, drugs, disobedience to parents, hostility to society." David Ewen

"raw, sexy, ... the most overtly sexual form of pop music." Loyd Grosman.

"brute - sexual (rhythms and) lyrics." *Time* magazine

"songs that glorify dope addiction, homosexuality, immorality in general ... some absolutely encourage fornication and all varieties of things that would have been immoral 20 years ago." Gordon McLendon

"they made a survey and found out that up to 70% of all records are now sexually oriented. If you listen you'll hear sex in nearly every ---- thing." Hank Ballard

We now increasingly hear about the hidden messages which can be detected on some rock records when they are played backward. Called "backward masking", this technique was apparently already employed in the 1960's by groups such as the Beatles; most frequently the messages are satanic in nature although some promote drug usage. An example from a Led Zeppelin record: "I sing because I live with Satan. The Lord turns me off. There's no escaping it. Here's to my sweet Satan."

It is believed by many that these messages enter the subconscious.

The PERFORMERS: *Rock performance* is characterized by vulgarity and lewdness in movements and postures, clothing, suggestive groans and murmurs, handling of microphone and instruments, simulated actions and props on stage and the openly admitted reactions of some of the performers to the music. There have even been some arrests for indecent exposure during performance.

Rock concerts and festivals have frequently been accompanied by incredible and brutal violence:murder, brawling, rape; by sexual immorality and by getting stoned on dope and alcohol.

And generally, rock stars *live* what they sing: "many live openly immoral lives and flaunt their conduct before impressionable young teenagers. These acid-head, freaked-out purveyors of pornography ... exploit the generation gap to further alienate young people from their parents ... (are) anti-Establishment and patriotism ... idols to millions of America's youth; encouraging their young fans to 'blow their minds' and 'do their own thing'." Bob Larson.

Sexual perversions of every kind and the ingestion of enormous amounts of drugs and/or alcohol are admitted freely and without shame. A disproportionate number of rock stars meet with an early death or near-death as a result of their unbridled excesses.

So what is the answer to the question "What's wrong with rock?". The answer is that *EVERYTHING* is wrong with rock; not just primarily the beat, or the lyrics, or the performers but everything about this "music" is evil — devilishly evil. Delving into the subject has acquainted me with a world of depravity and perversity such as I could never have imagined. Small wonder many have called rock "Satan's music", "The devil's music", "a tool of Satan" and even "Satan's way of preparing the world for the Anti-Christ".

And you and I know that this evil is not somewhere out there — in the world. The motivation for writing this series of articles was not that rock 'n' roll has captivated the world but that Satan, through rock 'n' roll is busy captivating you Christian young people — the future church. It is not our intention at this time to consider the implications and consequences of rock music for our culture, our society, or the Christian — the Lord willing, we may

write something about that at a future time. Rather, it seemed to me that, before anything else, both parents and young people needed to be informed, to see more clearly not only that rock music *is* evil but also *why* it is evil.

When we were in Birmingham, Alabama, recently, Missionary Pastor Ron Van Overloop preached on this passage in Acts 19:18-20: "And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." And in this context the pastor spoke of rock music. Most of us have read or heard of groups of Christian young people who got together and burned or otherwise destroyed all their rock tapes and records. What about you? You say you believe? But remember that faith without works is dead: The Ephesians had a living faith: they were not only hearers but doers of the Word. Before all men, openly, and without counting the cost, they showed themselves to be true followers of Christ. They not only named the name of Christ but also departed from iniquity (II Tim. 2:19). They walked in newness of life, manifesting the fruits of the Spirit, which is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

It is my conviction that there are some of you who, knowing the evil of rock, really want to depart from the iniquity of rock music but you are having difficulty doing it, because of peer pressure, because it is so appealing to the flesh, because you are so used to it — almost addicted to it.

Allow me to submit to you two basic teachings of our Lord, without which it is impossible to lead truly sanctified lives. The first is "Abide in the Word, (then will ye be my disciples indeed)". More and more I am concerned and alarmed at the lack of knowledge of the Bible among us. How sad that there seems to be time for everything else, for busily running to and fro from morning till night and ***the one thing needful*** is neglected: daily, prayerful study of the Word of God. The second is "If any man will come after me, let him ***deny himself***". We call ourselves Christians but do we merely honor Him with our lips or do we ***live for Him*** instead of for self?

If we obey these words of the Lord, we will, like the Ephesians in Acts 19, be followers of God, as dear children, walking as children of light, abhorring that which is evil and cleaving to that which is good.

PS. To those of you who encouraged me to write these articles, to all of you who took the time and trouble to comment on them and to my number one proofreader, my husband, for his support and helpful suggestions, I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation. One thing troubles me a little: why so very few reactions from you young people? Could it be that many of you are not even reading your own publication, the *Beacon Lights*?

Enoch, Martin Luther, Mr. Newhouse, Mr. Ellis, Howie, and you and I

by Cal Kalsbeek

After he wrote his name on the top of his test, Howie's eyes fell upon question number one: "Name the judge who vowed to offer up as a burnt offering, 'Whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me,' if the Lord would give him the victory over the Amonites." Howie cringed! "If this is typical of the rest of the test questions," he thought, "there is no way I can pass this test." How it was that Shamgar popped into his head he could not tell, but Howie quickly scribbled (it was purposefully scribbled because he was not sure how to spell it) Shamgar in the blank. "Even if it is wrong," he thought, "Mr. Ellis will think I know *something*." Howie completed the rest of the test in like fashion. Though he managed to fill in all the spaces, there was no doubt in Howie's mind — and soon Mr. Ellis would know too — that it was a disaster. "Oh well," considered Howie as he handed in the test, "it's not my fault. I just didn't have time to prepare. There were so many *other* things I just *had* to do last night. Anyway, I passed the last test so I'll get a passing grade on my report card."

The next day, Mr. Ellis asked Howie to see him after the rest of the class was dismissed. "Oh no!" thought Howie, "Another sermon!"

Howie walked up to the front after the rest of the class had left. "You had only 36% right on your test yesterday," said Mr. Ellis, "Did you study, Howard?"

Howie hung his head. "No," he said, "I just didn't have time; but I promise I'll do better next time."

Mr. Ellis frowned, "How many times have I heard that from you before? And how many times have I told you that you simply have to *make* time for the things that are important?"

After listening to the rest of what Mr. Ellis had to say about proper use of his talents and his responsibilities before God, Howie was dismissed. "You're right, Mr. Ellis," he said before he left, "but it's so hard to do that. What do you suggest I do?"

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

Howard and Mr. Ellis have brought us over very familiar territory, have they not? Howie's problem is *our* problem over and over again: it's the age old "Battle of Faith" that confronts us daily. Yes, it confronts us — as it did

Howard — in school, but it doesn't stop there. It envolves our *whole* life! We, you and I, would do well, I think, to address that question of Howard and make it our own: "What should I do to prepare myself to fight against Satan, this wicked world, and my own sinful flesh?" As we seek an answer for this question, let's first look at some voices of experience. Others have faced the same questions that we have; what did they do?

One voice of experience we should consider is that of Enoch. Genesis 5:24 informs us concerning Enoch that he walked with God. Certainly evident here is the idea that Enoch was close to God. He communed with God. According to Hebrews 11:5, he even "pleased God." Enoch was a hero of faith; he fought a good fight! If we were to ask our question of Enoch, he would likely tell us to *Walk with God.*

Hebrews 11 is not, however, an exhaustive list of the heroes of faith; there were countless others. Our history books do not tell us of all the faithful saints who lived and died in faith, but they do tell us about those of Martin Luther's caliber. We all know something of the battle of faith which he fought, but where did he get the strength to fight it? The fact that Luther called Psalm 118 *his friend*, suggests the answer, I think. This sampling of that Psalm will explain Luther's love for it: "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6) Let's ask our question of Luther, our second voice of experience: "What do you suggest I do as I am confronted with my "Battle of Faith"? Doubtless Luther would answer that we should *look to the Word of God.*

For a third voice of experience, let's each of us look to someone we know, or knew, personally. This could be a friend, a brother or sister, a parent, a grandparent, a teacher or a minister. The Lord still has His heroes of faith, and we should not overlook them as we seek help in answering our question.

Until March 12, 1982, one could have gone to the far northwest corner of the Allendale Nursing Home in search of an answer. Once there, your question would have been answered without the need of asking it. One could not visit with Mr. Richard Newhouse of our Hope Church of Walker, Michigan, without hearing his answer: The Bible and the songs of Zion were his meditation day and night: *They were his life*! Conversations with Mr. Newhouse never seemed very far removed from the Word of God. Obviously *that was his strength*!

With one accord, our voices of experience have directed us to God's Word as the source of our strength to fight the "Battle of Faith." The Bible itself bears witness of the correctness of their testimony. Consider, for example, Psalm 119:105: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

* * * * * * * * * * * *

So, our question is answered: God's Word is our sword as we fight the "Battle of Faith."

But that is easier said than done! *How* does one use the Word as he walks the path of life? Again the Word of God provides the answer: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (II Timothy 2:15) The apostle Paul here enjoins

Timothy, and us, to engage in personal *study* of God's Word: call it personal devotions if you will. Since it is a personal study, we must continually ask during our study, "What does this Word of God say to *me*?"

There are a number of available materials that can be helpful in this endeavor. *Standard Bearer* meditations and some of the *Beacon Lights* articles can be especially useful in personal devotional study, as can be some of the Reformed Free Publishing Association publications: the book *In the Sanctuary* by Rev. H. Hoeksema comes to mind. But we must remember, the *focus* of our study is to be the Holy Scriptures, and our study must be a regular, habitual activity. All habits are not bad! To establish a habit — good or bad — it must be done with regularity. To start with, a few minutes each day will suffice. Once the habit is established, let it grow. Remember, the beginning mountain climber does not start with Mount Everest! It's time we begin the *habit* of personal Bible study — if we have not already.

What shall we study? Maybe you have particular needs that would direct you to a particular book of the Bible or to selected passages that address your needs. The Psalms are especially appropriate for personal study. The Gospels, Acts, Romans, and Galations come to mind as books for which Rev. Kortering has written Bible study guides in the *Standard Bearer*. Surely these would be useful in our study of these books. But I wonder if *what* we use for our personal devotions is all that important as long as it is God's Holy Word. Notice in this connection II Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Take note of the *all*! *All* Scripture is profitable! With that assurance, we need not be so concerned with *what* part of the Bible we use for our personal devotions: rather we should be concerned *that* we have a time of personal devotions!

The above mentioned passage from Timothy also has something to say about what our attitude towards the Scriptures must be. Notice, the Scriptures are for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. The emphasis here is on what the Scriptures have to *say to us*! God forbid that we ever attempt to impose our ideas upon it! Rather, our approach to the Holy Bible must be that of a humble servant who bows before his master and says with Samuel, "Speak, for thy servant heareth."

* * * * * * * * * * * *

We have come a long way together, you and I. From Howie we have learned of our responsibilities before God. We could empathize with Howie, for we are confronted with the very same struggle that he was. We called it the "Battle of Faith." In looking for help in this struggle, we sought direction from those who have fought the battle before us, and with one accord they pointed to the Bible as the source of our strength. Further, we found that God's authoritative Word says the same thing. So we looked at ways of approaching that Word in regular personal devotions.

Do we, you and I, *have time*?

LOVE [I Cor. 13]

Though as the golden orator I speak
And with the voice of angels move my tongue
But have not Love, I am as clanging brass;
My words are less than tinkling from a cymbal rung.
And though endowed with knowledge unsurpassed
And faith to move a mountain from its place,
And though I hold the keys to myst'ries yet unsolved
But have not Love, still I am nothing but an empty space.
Yea, though I give my earthly goods away
And sacrifice my body to be burned
But have not Love, Thy Love, within my heart,
From all my losses is no profit earned.

Love is longsuffering and truly kind;
There is no envy in it and no vanity.
Love does not act unseemly; does not seek herself;
Is not provoked to anger easily.
Love thinks no evil nor seeks wickedness,
But her rejoicing's in the truthful way.
In all things Love bears and believes,
Hopes and endures; Love does not fall away.
Though prophecies shall fail and tongues grow silent
And knowledge vanishes, yet shall not fall
Faith, Hope, or Love, these three.
But Love, Love is the greatest of them all.

—Sue Looyenga

NEWS from, for and about our churches

by Marcia Hanko

BIRTHS

—Mr. & Mrs. Steve Van Baren of South Holland were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Melissa.

—Mr. & Mrs. Bob Vermeer, of Lynden, were blessed with the birth of a daughter on February 5.

—Mr. & Mrs. Dan Van Dyken, of Lynden, were blessed with the birth of a daughter on March 17.

—Mr. & Mrs. Lyle Kooiker, of Hull, were blessed with a daughter, on March 12.

MEMBERSHIP TRANSFERS

—The papers of Sandy (Kamps) Westing were transferred from Hope to Hudsonville.

ACTIVITIES

—The Y. P. of First served a breakfast on Saturday March 20. Proceeds were for the 1982 Convention.

—Hudsonville Choral Society presented an Easter Program on March 28.

—The Choral Society of Hope presented their Easter Program on April 11.

—The South Holland Ladies Auxiliary sponsored a singspiration on April 11.

—A pancake breakfast was held on March 13 in Loveland Church.

—The Y. P. of Loveland sponsored a volleyball game and a baked goods auction on Monday, March 22.

MARRIAGES

—Jim Holstege & Kathy Vanden Berg were united in marriage on March 4.

—Karla Kooiker & Doug Kats were united in marriage on March 26.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

—Sandy & Bev Holstege of Hudsonville made public confession of their faith on March 21.

—Joann Kortering & Ray Schwarz of Loveland made public confession of faith on March 28.

August and the
42nd Annual PRYPS Convention
are drawing closer.
Make your plans to join us in
Iowa, August 17-20!

OUR CHANGELESS CALLING
IN A CHANGING WORLD

II Peter 3:11

1. Called to Obedience—Rev. Kuiper
2. Called to Moral Purity—Rev. Bruinsma
3. Called to Faithful Church Membership
—Rev. Kortering

Looking forward to seeing YOU!
—Midwestern YPS