

# Insight Into



November - December 2020

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Meditation • Lessons from Sickness**

**Looking Around Us: When Warnings are Rejected**

**What the Bible says about Itself: Prophecies about Christ • Psalm 46**

**Honour thy Mother • Seven Solemn Questions without Answers**

**Boasting • Full Barns, but What Then?**

# Insight Into

## General Information

**Insight Into** is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

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### *Meditation*

by Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg .....pg. 1

### *Lessons from Sickness*

by Rev. J. C. Ryle .....pg. 3

### *Looking Around Us: When Warnings are Rejected*

Taken from *The Young People's Magazine* .....pg. 7

### *What the Bible Says about Itself: Prophecies about Christ*

by Rev. Charles Hodge.....pg. 9

### *Psalm 46*

by Rev. David Dickson.....pg. 12

### *Honour thy Mother*

by P. C. Beeke .....pg. 13

### *Seven Solemn Questions without Answers*

from a Church Bulletin.....pg. 14

### *Boasting*

by Rev. C. Vogelaar.....pg. 15

### *Full Barns, but What Then?*

by John Newton .....pg. 17

With quotations from

Matthew Henry, Rev. Thomas Brooks,  
Rev. William Law, Augustine, Rev. Stephen Charnock,  
Rev. Thomas Watson, William Penn, John Calvin,  
Rev. Samuel Rutherford, Martin Luther, and an  
excerpt from *The Classic Works of Thomas Brooks*

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# MEDITATION

## Advent

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg

Things take time, and it is often good to be prepared for death or illness, but also for church celebrations. For example, we have preparation services before the Lord's Supper is held. In comparable light, we can see the Advent time. Advent is a four-week preparation for Christmas. It is a tradition which we do not read about in the Bible, but especially now that Christmas has become so commercialized, I think it would be good to pay more attention to the preparation for celebrating Christ's birth.

The celebration of something cannot be forced. God's children cannot make joy in Christ themselves, but they depend on God's Spirit. This applies to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but it also applies to the celebration of Christ's birth. Preparation is not only self-examination, asking yourself what the Son means to you and why you need Him. It is also contemplating the Incarnation itself, of its prediction, of the histories before birth, in order to work towards the highlight, namely, the celebration of Christmas itself. Advent means "coming," and in Advent we contemplate the coming of the Messiah. Not just on Sunday, but also during the week, our concerns should not only be about what we will eat and drink. Also at Christmas, if things go well, it will go deeper.

Have you ever had a truly blessed Christmas? A time when you could worship the Son, because you saw Him, because He was revealed to your soul? The Lord can give that again and God is worthy of that worship. Or have we never celebrated Christmas with our soul? Be busy with that, and realize the poverty of being without God and Christ in the world. Let us pray that the Lord works in us the willingness to repent, and repentance itself, to be holy, to look forward with joy to a

biblical hope, and to be able to celebrate the birth of God's Son for the first time or by renewal.

*"LORD, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee"* (Psalm 38:9).

*"I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry"* (Psalm 40:1).

*"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope"* (Psalm 130:5).

*"And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation"* (Isaiah 25:9).

*"Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy Name, and to the remembrance of Thee"* (Isaiah 26:8).

"Those whom God leads, He leads to His holy hill, and to His tabernacles; those therefore who pretend to be led by the Spirit and yet turn their backs upon instituted ordinances, certainly deceive themselves."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

"Human doctrines have no humbling power in them."

~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

"If a man will boast of anything as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin, for there is nothing else but this, that is his own property."

~ Rev. William Law (1686-1761)

# Lessons from Sickness



Some thoughts on sickness from a meditation by  
Rev. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)  
on John 11:3b, *“He whom Thou lovest is sick.”*

Lazarus was a friend of Jesus, yet he was sick. Sickness is everywhere, in Europe, in Asia, in America, in both warm and cold countries, and in civilized nations and wild tribes. Men, women, and children get sick and die. Illness occurs in all classes. Grace does not lift the believer beyond the reach of sickness. The rich cannot buy an exemption, and rank and position cannot prevent these attacks. Kings and their subjects, masters and servants, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, teachers and students, doctors and patients, and ministers and their hearers are all equal to this great enemy. *“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit”* (Proverbs 18:11). An Englishman’s house is called his castle, but there are no doors or bars to keep out sickness and death. *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength, labour, and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away”* (Psalm 90:10). This testimony is indeed true. It was true over 3,000 years ago, and it is still true today.

How will we explain this? What answer will we give to our children who ask, “Father, why do people get sick, and why do they die?” These are important questions. Can we suppose for a moment that God created sickness and disease from the beginning? Can we imagine that He, who formed our world in such a perfect order, was the Creator of needless suffering and pain? Can we imagine that He who made everything *“very good”* (Genesis 1:31) so ordained Adam’s human race that they would get sick and die.

This introduces a great imperfection in God’s perfect works. The only explanation is the one given by the Bible itself. Something has entered the world that has dethroned man from his original position and robbed him of his original privileges. Something has come in that marred the perfect order of God’s creation. And what is that “something”? It is sin. *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). Sin

is the cause of all sickness, disease, pain, and suffering that is prevalent on earth. This is all part of a curse that entered the world when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and fell. There would have been no sickness if there had not been a Fall in Paradise.

### **Benefits of sickness**

If man had never sinned, I would be unsure of seeing the benefit of illness. But since sin is in the world, I can see that sickness can be a good thing. It is both a blessing and a curse. Sin is a rough master, I admit, but it is a true friend to a man's soul.

Sickness helps people think about death. Most live as if they will never die. They follow business, politics, science, or pleasure, as if the earth is their eternal home. They plan and scheme for the future, like the rich fool in the parable, as if they had a long life expectancy and have their lives in their own hands. A serious illness sometimes goes far to dispel such false prophecies. It awakens people to their daydreams, to remind them that they must die as well as live. Now this, I say emphatically, is a mighty good.

Sickness helps people to think seriously about God, and about their soul, and about the future. Most cannot find time for such thoughts in their days of health. They push them away, as they find it difficult and unpleasant. A serious illness sometimes has a wonderful power to gather these thoughts and set them in front of a person's soul. Even an angry king like Benhadad could think of Elisha when he was sick (2 Kings 8:8). Even Gentile sailors, when death was near, *"were afraid, and cried every one to his god"* (Jonah 1:5). Certainly, anything that makes a person think is a good thing.

Sickness helps to soften a person's heart and teaches wisdom. The natural heart is hard as stone. It cannot see well in any thing that is not of this life, that has not brought happiness to this world. A long illness can sometimes go far to correct these ideas. It exposes the emptiness and hollowness of what the world calls "good" things, and teaches us to keep these things in a loose hand. The businessman may discover that money alone is not all that the heart needs. The woman of the world finds that expensive clothes, reading novels, balls and operas are actually miserable comforters in a sickroom. Certainly, anything that requires us to change our standards of earthly things is a good thing.

Sickness helps us to balance and to humble ourselves. We are all naturally proud and exalted. Few, even the poorest, are free from this infection. Few are found who do not look down upon anyone else, flattering themselves that they are "not like other people." A sick bed is a powerful tamer

of such thoughts. It impresses upon us the mighty truth that we “*dwell in houses of clay*” (Job 4:19) and are “*crushed before the moth*” (Job 4:19), and that kings and subjects, masters and servants, rich and poor, are all dying creatures and will soon stand side by side before God. In view of the coffin and the grave, it is not easy to be proud. Surely everything this lesson teaches is good.

### **Sickness and our faith**

Finally, sickness helps us to test our religion. There are not many in the world who have no religion at all. Few have a religion that bears inspection. Most are satisfied with the traditions received from their ancestors, and they cannot give a reason for the hope that is in them. Now, sickness can sometimes be most helpful to a man in exposing the worthlessness of the foundation of his soul. It often shows him that he has nothing solid under his feet, and nothing solid in his hands. It leads him to admit that although he may have some form of religion, he has worshipped an “*UNKNOWN GOD*” (Acts 17:23) all his life. Many a creed is like the smooth waters of health, but proves to be most unhealthy and useless on the rough waves of the sickbed. Winter storms often reveal the defects of a man’s home, and disease often reveals the coarseness of a man’s soul. Certainly, anything that causes us to see the true character of our faith is good.

I am not saying that illness brings these benefits to all who get sick. I certainly cannot say that! Numerous people are yearly struck down by disease and restored to health, but apparently they have learned no lessons from their illness and returned to the world. Countless people go to the grave every year because of illness, but they receive no more spiritual impression from this than the beasts that die. These are terrible things to say, but they are true. The degree of deadness that can reach man’s heart and conscience shows a depth that I do not pretend to be able to fathom. But does illness impart the benefits of which I described to only a few? I will not say that. I believe that in many cases, illness produces impressions more or less similar to those I just spoke of. I believe that in many minds, sickness is God’s “day of visitation,” and that on a sickbed, feelings are constantly aroused that, by God’s grace, can result in salvation. I believe that in pagan lands, sickness often paves the way to the missionary, causing the poor idolater to lend a willing ear to the good news of the gospel. I believe that in our country, sickness is one of the greatest resources for the minister of the gospel, and that sermons heard are often taken home in days of sickness, something we neglected in the days of health. I believe

that sickness is one of God's primary tools in saving people, and that while the feelings it evokes are often temporary, they are also often a means by which the Spirit works effectively on the heart.

### **Sickness is a blessing**

In summary, I strongly believe that the diseases of man's bodies have often led, by God's wonderful provision, to the salvation of their souls. If sickness can do the things I talked about, if sickness in an evil world can help people think of God and their souls, then sickness brings benefits to mankind. We have no right to grumble at illness or to complain about its presence in the world. We should rather thank God for it. Sickness is God's testimony. It is the soul's counsellor. It awakens the conscience and it purifies the heart. Sickness is a blessing and not a curse, a gain and not a loss, a friend and not an enemy to humanity. As long as we have a world in which sin resides, sickness is a blessing.

*~ Taken, with editing, from <https://www.terhoogekerk.nl>*

"If you build upon yourself, your edifice will be a mere ruin. Man ought to be ashamed of being proud, seeing God was humbled for his (man's) sake."  
*~ Augustine (354-430)*

"A proud faith is as much a contradiction as a humble devil."  
*~ Rev. Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)*

"The gospel seldom thrives where the apple of strife grows."  
*~ Rev. Thomas Watson (1620-1686)*

"Truth often suffers more by the heat of its defenders than by the arguments of its opposers."  
*~ William Penn (1644-1718)*



# Looking Around Us: When Warnings are Rejected

Taken from *The Young People's Magazine*

When Leonie was young, she was diagnosed with diabetes, which caused her blood sugar level to become too high. So she had to be careful about what she ate and to take insulin injections.

Then in her teens, she rebelled against these restrictions. For some years, this did not seem to be a problem. But in the end, during her twenties, her carelessness caught up with her. She began to have problems with her eyes and within a year, she lost her sight completely. She admits that it was largely her own fault, but her blindness cannot be reversed. It is too late to do anything about it now, except to take care of herself to avoid further damage to her body.

Is there not also a warning here for another and even more important area? What about your soul? We all have a major problem with our souls. It is the disease of sin. Every individual in every successive generation suffers from it. Sin has infected us through and through.

And we are warned, time and again, about the problem and about its consequences. The Bible gives such warnings as these, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:4). It will die eternally unless that person repents and believes the gospel. So "*he that believeth not the Son [of God] shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36). If he does not believe, the wrath of God will follow him all through his life--whether he is conscious of it or not--and will follow him into eternity. And preachers, if they are faithful to their Master, will repeat these warnings.

However, too many people rebel against the warnings; they want to continue with a sinful lifestyle. Too many people reject religion altogether or, if their conscience will not allow them to go so far, they do not want to become really serious about religion; they do not want it to distract them from their sinful pleasures. So they go on in their sins in spite of all the warnings they have read in the Bible, and they may have heard from the pulpit and from their parents.

But the warnings are true. People neglect them at their peril. How terrible it will be for them to die and awaken in a lost eternity, with all its fearful sufferings. They will have to acknowledge that it is all their own fault, and no doubt that will be part of the awfulness of their situation. Besides, there is no possibility of change; they cannot now find forgiveness; there is now no opportunity for repentance. In hell they may ask themselves repeatedly: What if ...? What if I had listened to the warnings I was given? What if I had turned from sin when its consequences were pointed out to me? What if I had sought the Lord when He might be found?

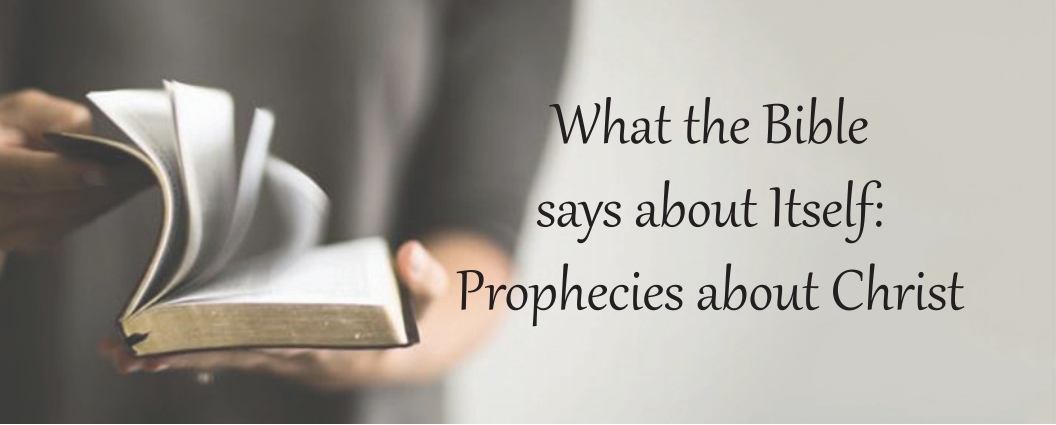
You have been warned once more. The matter is serious. It is urgent. There may be no time to spare. *“Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”* (Isaiah 55:6-7).

“No one has any communion with Christ but he who has received the true knowledge of Him from the word of the gospel.”  
~ *John Calvin* (1509-1564)

“It is the best riches not to desire riches.”  
~ *Rev. Thomas Brooks* (1608-1680)

“It is a fearful sin to make a rent and a hole in Christ’s mystical body because there is a spot in it.”  
~ *Rev. Samuel Rutherford* (1600-1661)

“The mystery of the humanity of Christ, that He sunk Himself into our flesh, is beyond all human understanding.”  
~ *Martin Luther* (1483-1546)



# What the Bible says about Itself: Prophecies about Christ

This article is taken, with editing, from *The Way of Life*  
by Rev. Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

## **The history of Scripture**

Jews and Christians have the writings of the Old Testament, which were produced by the prophets. Jews and Christians have them now; the Jews had them in the time of Christ. The Israelites in Judea and everywhere else acknowledged them then.

They can be traced back into history for centuries before Christ came. Three hundred years before then, they were translated into Greek and circulated widely. They contain the history, laws, and other writings of the people of Judea, whose existence and distinctive features are as well-known as those of any people in the world. It was because of these holy books that the Jews were what they were. Here we have a basis for an argument for the truth of Christianity, one which cannot be resisted. In these old writings, preserved in the hands of those who became open enemies of Christ, we find the coming of a deliverer clearly foretold.

## **Prophecies foretold**

Immediately after the Fall of man, God revealed that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. This prediction is the germ of all the later prophecies. Later predictions gradually revealed who the promised seed was to be, and how He was to destroy the power of evil. It was first made known that the Redeemer should belong to the race of Shem (Genesis 9:26). Then that He should be of the seed of Abraham, who was promised: "*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis 12:3). Then that He should be from the tribe of Judah, of whom it was foretold: "*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be*" (Genesis 49:10). Later it was revealed that He was to

come through the line of David: *“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding ... the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”* (Isaiah 11:1-2).

It was foretold that the Redeemer would come after a special messenger had appeared: *“Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts”* (Malachi 3:1). (The special messenger was to be John the Baptist.) The time, the manner, and the place of His birth were all predicted. As to the time, Daniel said, *“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks”* (Daniel 9:25). As to the miraculous manner of His birth, Isaiah said, *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7:14). As to the place, Micah said, *“Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel”* (Micah 5:2).

### **Prophet, Priest, and King**

This Deliverer was to be a poor man: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ... behold, thy king cometh unto thee ... lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”* (Zechariah 9:9). He was to be *“despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”* (Isaiah 53:3), and yet He was *“Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7:14)--that is, God with us. He was to be *“THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (Jeremiah 23:6); His name was to be: *“Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (Isaiah 9:6).

This Redeemer was to be a *Prophet*, a divine Teacher. *“The LORD thy God,”* said Moses, *“will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken”* (Deuteronomy 18:15). God says, *“Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles”* (Isaiah 42:1). And Christ said, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”* (Isaiah 61:1).

He was also to be a *Priest*. *“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek”* (Psalm 110:4).

*“He shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne” (Zechariah 6:13).*

That this Redeemer is a *King* is set forth in many prophecies. God said of the Messiah: *“Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion” (Psalm 2:6). “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psalm 45:6-7). “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder... Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever” (Isaiah 9:6-7).*

### **A spiritual kingdom to the salvation of Jews and Gentiles**

The features of the Messiah’s kingdom were also clearly predicted. It was to be spiritual, in distinction from the more outward state of religion in Old Testament times, with all its ceremonies. *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers ... I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33).* Hence the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is so often mentioned in connection with the promised Redeemer: *“I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh” (Joel 2:28).*

Again, this kingdom was not to be confined to the Jews, but was to include all the world. As early as the book of Genesis, it was declared that all nations would obey Shiloh, and that all the nations would be blessed in Abraham and his seed. God promised the Messiah the heathen for His inheritance and the utmost parts of the earth for His possession. And He said, *“It is a light thing that thou shouldst be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be My salvation unto the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).*

*“Every man obeys Christ as he prizes Christ, and no otherwise.”*

*~ Rev. Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)*

# Psalm 46

*“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah”* (verses 1-3).

Rev. David Dickson (1583-1663)

**A**lbeit the Lord will not exempt His people from trouble, yet He will be near them in time of trouble; and when their weakness is discovered to them, then He will help them, and will not delay His help too long, but will give help in time of need effectually; for God is to His people *“a very present help in trouble.”*

Nothing can guard the heart of God’s people against the terror of possible or imminent troubles, save faith in God; for here the Lord’s people, having fixed their faith, make this inference: *“Therefore will not we fear.”*

The terror of apparent trouble is the touchstone of confidence in God, and then is faith fixed, when it does look upon the greatest dangers and troubles that can be imagined, with resolution to adhere to God, and to that truth which persecutors oppose, whatever may come, *“will not we fear, though the earth be removed.”*

Albeit the whole frame of the world were changed, and the work of Creation were either dissolved or confounded, which shall be in effect at the last day; yet faith finds footing and ground to stand upon in God Himself: *“Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.”*

- Taken from his book *Commentary on the Psalms*

# Honour thy Mother



P. C. Beeke  
(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

It was not easy for Augustine to hear every Sunday, “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12), especially when the two are very different.

Oh yes, they are his parents. But who then should he honour, his mother Monica, who loves the Lord, or father Patricius, who only lives for worldly pleasures? What would you do? Follow your mother, who struggles with God every day for you, or your father, who sets the wrong example and only wants his son to become famous.

Augustine solves this problem by making a compromise: “Lord, convert me, but not yet.” He chooses a way ... himself! He has the wrong friends, and he lives with a girlfriend (and has a son). In a “far country” (Luke 15), you can forget your praying mother and worldly father. Rather have fun in the world, without a Bible, and always a time of being on “vacation”!

Actually, everything goes well without God! You can fight God for a long time, but his mother Monica doesn’t stop praying either. A bishop comforts her by saying, “A son of such tears cannot be lost.” When the divine “Halt!” comes before Augustine, he is burdened by his empty heart. But saying goodbye to sin is not easy. In the back of the garden he fights violently with God and ... himself. When a girl next door sings, “Take and read,” he hears God’s voice. He takes Romans 13 and reads: “*Not in rioting and drunkenness, ... but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ*” (verses 13-14).

For the first time, Augustine does something that he never could before, he bows before God. This happened 1,600 years ago. That same God still works that same grace, in the same youth with those same sins. Why? “*The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims*” (Psalm 99:1). Therefore, Augustine now knows: “The heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee, O God.”

# Seven Solemn Questions without Answers

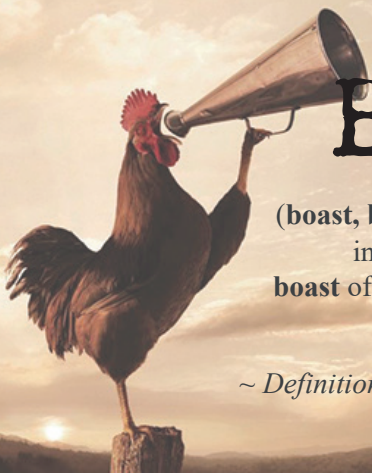
1. *“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? And your labour for that which satisfieth not?”* (Isaiah 55:2).
2. *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall man give in exchange for His soul?”* (Mark 8:36-37).
3. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”* (Hebrews 2:3).
4. *“What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? ... where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?”* (1 Peter 4:17-18).
5. *“For the great day of His wrath is come: and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:17).
6. *“And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* (Luke 6:46).
7. *“But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”* (Luke 12:20).

*(From a Church Bulletin)*

“Death knows no difference between robes and rags, between prince and peasant. *“All flesh is grass”* (Isaiah 40:6). The flesh of princes, nobles, counsellors, generals, etc., is grass, as well as the flesh of the lowest beggar that walks the streets. “The mortal scythe,” says one, “is master of the royal sceptre; it mows down the lilies of the crown, as well as the grass of the field.” Never was there orator so eloquent, nor monarch so potent, who could either persuade or withstand the stroke of death when it came! Death’s motto is, “I spare none!” It is one of Solomon’s sacred aphorisms, *“The rich and poor meet together”* (Proverbs 22:2), sometimes in the same bed, sometimes at the same board, and sometimes in the same grave. Death is the common inn of all mankind.”

*~ Excerpt from The Classic Works of Thomas Brooks*





# Boasting

(**boast, brag, vaunt, crow** means to express pride in oneself or one's accomplishments.

**boast** often suggests ostentation and exaggeration, boasts of every trivial success)

*~ Definition taken from the Merriam-Webster dictionary*

Rev. C. Vogelaar

The little boy said to his friend, “My father is the strongest, for he can easily lift up that heavy thing there.”

His friend answered, “My father is so smart; he can speak many languages.”

What were those boys doing? They were so proud of their fathers that they exaggerated and bragged a little about them. It would not be hard to find many other examples of this boasting. The world is full of it. The one does it in a more subtle way; the other does it openly, boldly, and often without asking him or herself whether it is true what he or she says. Many would like to make an impression upon others of power, of riches, or of beauty. Therefore, they buy, or they just talk, but all with the intent to make them look better in the eyes of others. The root of this boasting is pride. We are all proud creatures, with the desire to be a little bigger, a little more important, or more beautiful than others are.

It is only God's grace which makes us true and honest before Him, and that will also have its effect on how we behave towards others. That does not take away the need to listen to what God's Word says about boasting. Often boasting is mentioned in a negative way. In Romans 1: 29 and 30, we find a long list of evils, including “*backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud,*” and also boasters are mentioned. The apostle warns in James 4:16, “*But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.*” And do we not read of God's displeasure about Goliath, who boasted in his own strength, and Nebuchadnezzar, who boasted about the great city of Babylon that he had built?

The pride of man manifests itself in many different forms in our modern society. We may boast of being a great nation, a very capable leader, a faithful church that still has the truth, or even of being a well-exercised child of God, but it does not please God. We are boasting when we attribute our abilities, wisdom, strength, and even what we may have received as a gracious gift of God, to ourselves. Oh, that proud heart of man, even of a child of God who are so inclined to ascribe to ourselves what belongs to God alone. Discovering grace by the Holy Spirit is so necessary in order to make and to keep us what we really are. And then what we are more than a beggar, we are too much. We must live from the gifts which the exalted Christ will distribute according to His will and in His wisdom.

The question may arise whether all boasting is wrong and condemned by God. The Bible teaches us there is also a boasting that is God-glorifying and that we all should desire. We read in Psalm 34:2, *“My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.”* Such a boasting is giving all the honour and glory to God alone. The poet says in Psalm 44:8, *“In God we boast all the day long.”* And in many other places we read of a holy boasting, in which there is a praising and honouring of the Lord. The prophet testifies in Jeremiah 9:24, *“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.”*

My dear young friends, the world is full of dishonesty, of vain boasting, and that not only in politics, or in business life, but sometimes under a religious covering. Many preachers are aiming at making you feel good about yourselves, as being a good Christian. Let it not impress you too much. Be afraid of it. Ask the Lord to make you who you really are; that is a hell-worthy undeserving sinner. Really, it is such a good place, when you may bow under God and experience that He looks upon such a creature in mercy, only for the sake of His dear Son. He made Himself of no reputation, that He might restore what we have robbed and taken to ourselves. Then this will give you a simple humble life in which you sometimes will have to stand alone. However, His favour and His nearness is more than all the glitter and vanity the world offers. It will then be your desire to boast of Him, of His free and sovereign grace alone. Therein He will be glorified.

# Full Barns, but What Then?

A poem by John Newton (1725-1807), based on Luke 12:16-21

“My barns are full, my stores increase,  
and now for many years,  
Soul, eat and drink, and take thine ease,  
secure from wants and fears.”

Thus while our worldling boasted once,  
(as many now presume)  
He heard the Lord Himself pronounce  
his sudden, awful doom:

“This night, vain fool, thy soul must pass  
into a world unknown;  
And who shall then the stores possess  
which thou hast called thine own?”

Thus blinded mortals fondly scheme  
for happiness below;  
Death destroys the pleasing dream,  
and they awake to woe.

Ah, who can speak the vast dismay  
that fills the sinner’s mind,  
When torn, by death’s strong hand away,  
he leaves his all behind?

Worldlings who cleave to earthly things,  
but are not rich to God,  
Will feel that death is full of stings,  
and hell a dark abode.

Dear Saviour, make us timely wise,  
Thy gospel to attend;  
That we may live above the skies  
when time and life shall end.