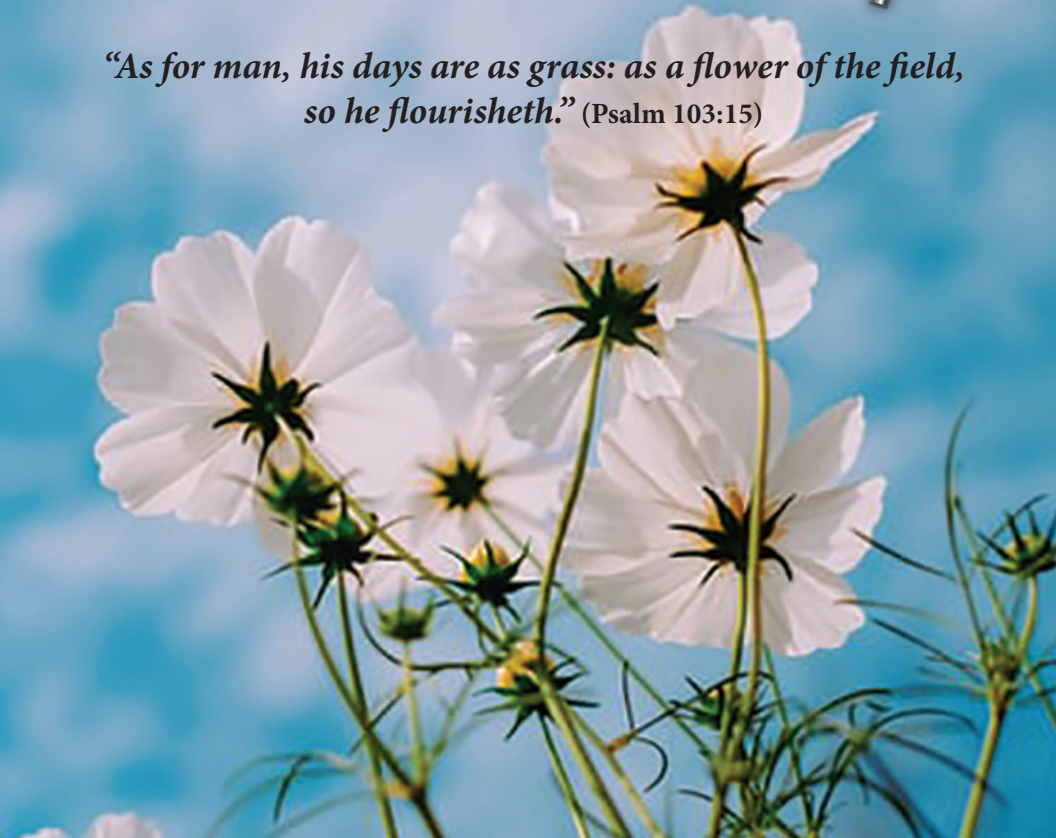


# Insight Into



May / June 2021

*“As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field,  
so he flourisheth.” (Psalm 103:15)*



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**Meditation • Conversion is Necessary • Jesus' Life on Earth**

*“What man is he That Liveth, and Shall not see Death?”*

*“Will Ye Also Go Away?”*

**Biblical Standards Exchanged for Mindless Conformity**

**Seeking for Happiness**

# 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.

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg, President

Rev. H. Hofman, Vice President

Elder R. de Kok, Editorial Committee Member

Elder J. Timmer, Administrator

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The address of this magazine is that of the secretary of the Editorial Committee:

Mr. James Timmer  
2026 Timon Road  
Everson, WA 98247  
U.S.A.  
Jim@westcoastplants.com

Authors are requested to send their articles to:

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg  
8920-3 Broadway St.  
Chilliwack, B.C. Canada V2P 5W1

If possible, send your contribution by e-mail:  
ppvanruit@gmail.com

### SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Subscription Rates: Canada	\$8.00 CAD
United States	\$8.00 USD
International	\$25.00 CAD

Subscriptions for **Insight Into** run from January to December (six issues annually) and should be renewed at the end of each year.

No payment is necessary if your consistory is already providing you with a subscription. Your donations are greatly appreciated.

Donation cheques should be made payable to **Insight Into** and mailed to the Subscription Manager.

For subscriptions, payment, address changes, or an e-mail copy, please contact:

Mrs. Marian Lagemaat nrcinsightinto@gmail.com  
8886 Upper Prairie Road 604-794-5887 PST  
Chilliwack, B.C. V2P 6H4 Canada

Mailing manager: Mrs. Lena Sterkenburg

### *Meditation*

by Rev. H. de Leeuw ..... pg. 1

### *Conversion is Necessary*

by Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg ..... pg. 3

### *Jesus' Life on Earth*

by Mr. S. Timmer ..... pg. 4

### *"What man is he That Liveth, and Shall not see Death?"*

by various authors ..... pg. 8

### *"Will Ye Also Go Away?"*

by Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne ..... pg. 10

### *Biblical Standards Exchanged for Mindless Conformity*

by the *Insight Into* editors ..... pg. 12

### *Seeking Happiness*

by Rev. A. M. den Boer ..... pg. 16

With Quotations from Isaiah 40:8,  
Song of Solomon 2:1, Matthew 6:28, and  
Hebrews 12:1.

**Insight Into** is also available in PDF format and can be sent to you by e-mail. Please text 1-604-793-3848 or e-mail [ajdenboer@shaw.ca](mailto:ajdenboer@shaw.ca) if you are interested in receiving this publication electronically. For questions, suggestions, or ideas for future topics, text 1-604-316-0566.

# MEDITATION

*“Tell us”*

(Matthew 24:3).

Rev. H. de Leeuw

These are the words of the disciples to the Lord Jesus. They have heard something which is exceedingly difficult for them to understand. If it comes down to it, this goes against the grain of their religious preferences.

Christ has spoken the well-known words, *“There shall not be left here one stone upon another”* (Matthew 24:2). These words refer to the temple. The disciples were impressed with the manner of stones. They were in a way proud of their temple. Therefore, these words hit home hard with the disciples.

The Lord had to teach the disciples that His kingdom is not of this world. They did not understand it. But they came to Him and asked Him, *“Tell us, when shall these things be?”* Do you notice what the Lord Jesus did? He told them.

What do you walk with? Especially in these times? Do you see the example in the Scriptures? Do not lean on your own interpretations; do not go to your conspiracy theory news sites. The summary of Matthew 24 is in verse 35, *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.”* The passing away of our “stones” is inevitable. It is a divine shall! How busy we are to hold on to our stones! But they shall all pass away. The Lord Jesus reveals at the beginning of this chapter that those who do not understand this lesson came to Him, and they received instruction. Is that not a solid foundation amid all the turmoil? Dear friends, He still teaches that His kingdom is not of this world. He still receives sinners and eats with them; He still desires to receive the ignorant and teaches them. May you learn by true regeneration to take your refuge in Him, because His words shall not pass away!

Would true conversion still be happening? I know you walk with that question. The surest thing that I read of in this chapter is the word “elect.” Who is that? Sinners who are unconditionally elected. Sinners who shall be brought in. Sinners who under the external call shall experience the irresistible inward call of the Holy Spirit. Young

people, or whoever reads this, what a worthy cause to open your Bible, to try to pray to Him, to come up faithfully under the means. Dear young people, the elect is from God's side, the purpose why the world still stands. For the elect's sake, there is still in our midst the preaching of law and gospel. Even if there would only be one more to be added, then bow your knees and ask, "Lord, remember me in grace." Because of that word "elect," amid all the judgments that are foretold in this chapter, there is hope for true conversion in our day. Do not be too down, too discouraged. Do not look at all the confusing differing opinions about a certain theory and about this rule and that regulation. Read your Bible, seek Him on your knees, because the God who told His disciples all these things is still alive and gathering sinners to Himself.

*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever."* (Isaiah 40:8)

*"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."* (Song of Solomon 2:1)

*"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin."* (Matthew 6:28)



# Conversion is Necessary

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg



**T**o really know what you live for, and to want to live for, the most important thing is that your eyes must be opened and your will must be renewed. We are so naturally focused on this earth and on ourselves that the true purpose is not fulfilled, and without mercy, we keep going our own way. Despite the best advice and hundreds of sermons, it is only when God intervenes and makes us alive that things will change.

Let me explain that. For example, you cannot force love. No one can get angry on command, and you cannot arouse desires yourself. We also cannot intellectually turn on a switch when it comes to the purpose for which we live. It takes a miracle to pray humbly and contentedly: *“Give us this day our daily bread”* (Matthew 6:11). Without grace, you can repeat those words, but keep in mind that we want much more than *“food and raiment”* (1 Timothy 6:8), as the Apostle Paul expressed. Conversion is necessary.

What happens when the Lord transforms us and makes us alive? First let me say that God’s children are not made perfect by being born again. The most holy is just beginning. Yet there is a dramatic difference, just as there is a difference between life and death. When our eyes are opened, God takes centre stage, and we see that God has a right to us. Everything else becomes less important. We want to be reconciled to God. The favour of God becomes everything, and we desire to live for Him. The Lord reveals the Mediator, and Christ becomes our life. You no longer want to ask for wealth, because the desire feels wrong and is ungodly. You still find yourself hundreds of times in worldliness, but there is also another side. *“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after”* (Psalm 27:4), wrote David. Only in that light do we begin to work in the right way according to God’s will. In the last verse of Psalm 90, we read, *“And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it”* (verse 17). The Lord is calling you, dear friends.

*“Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee”* (Psalm 63:3).

# Jesus' Life on Earth

*“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”*

(John 1:14).

Mr. S. Timmer

## **He came to this earth**

It is most remarkable that God came into this world. According to John 3:17, *“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”* This was one of the greatest mercies, because He was sent to do His Father’s will and ransom a people for His glory.

## **His life span**

The events of Jesus’ physical life upon earth span a short part of history, from approximately 0 to 33 AD (scholars disagree with the exact year, but His birth is thought to be very close to the year 0). Each year we are reminded of His birth as we hear of Mary and Joseph entering Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah 5:2. However, Jesus is eternal, that is, from everlasting to everlasting. Consider what is described in Proverbs 8, verses 22 to 23: *“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.”*

## **Where He lived**

The events of Jesus’ life upon earth also span a small geographical expanse from Egypt to the southwest, to Perea east of the Jordan River, and to Galilee to the north. Let us focus on three of these locations.

### **1. Galilee of the Gentiles**

Jesus spent most of His childhood years and the years of His ministry in the northern part of Israel in a place called Galilee. There we hear of Nazareth, His childhood dwelling, where He worked as a carpenter with His father, according to Mark 6:3, *“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Judah, and Simon?”* Galilee was also where His baptism took place and where He was filled with the Holy Spirit. *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him”* (Matthew 3:13). This was where He began to preach after coming from the Judean desert where He had been tempted (Luke 4:14-15); *“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee ... and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.”* Galilee was the location of the best sermon ever recorded along the shores of the Sea of

Galilee, as people sat upon the grassy hillside in which He described those who are truly blessed. It was from Galilee that He gathered at least 6 of His 12 disciples who would later go into the world to preach *“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations”* (Luke 24:47). The cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin were also in Galilee, where much of His preaching and most of His mighty works were done. Ominously, it was upon these cities that Jesus pronounced such great woes. *“Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell”* (Matthew 11:21, 23).

## **2. “He must needs go through Samaria”**

Jesus also spent a short time in Samaria which is between Judea and Galilee. It was very unusual for Jews to travel through Samaria, because the Samaritans were considered especially evil. They were descendants of the Israelites from the 10 tribes that had intermarried with Gentiles after the fall of Samaria around 722 BC. As a result of these intermarriages, they had adopted much that was contrary to God’s Word. They even had their own special mount called “Mount Gerizim,” which they claimed falsely to have been where Abraham offered up his son Isaac and also where they built a temple. This was a direct violation of God’s command in Deuteronomy 12:13-14, *“Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.”* Many Psalms speak of God’s special care of Jerusalem as God’s chosen place such as Psalm 76:1-2, *“In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In [Jeru] Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling place in Zion.”*

Yet, remarkably, Jesus also came to Samaria, as is recorded in John 4:4, *“He must needs go through Samaria.”* On His way to Galilee, instead of taking the longer route that most Jews would take to avoid the odious Samaritans, He traveled to a Samaritan city called Sychar and sat upon a well around noon. He had to go there, for to this place His Father had sent Him to save a lost sheep. But not just one sheep, because His grace for Gentiles was magnified to the salvation of many who testified, *“Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world”* (John 4:42).

## **3. Zion, founded on the mountains**

Jesus spent time in Judea in the south of Israel as well. Here we find cities like Jericho and Jerusalem. What wonderful events are again recorded in

these locations. Let us focus only on just a few events or locations in or near Jerusalem. Here was the temple where all Jews must travel three times a year. Jews must travel for the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, and Jesus did also. Not only were the feasts shadows and types of great spiritual truths, but so was the temple itself. Nearly every part of the temple was fulfilled in Jesus--the High Priest, the door, the sacrifice, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense, the blood that was sprinkled, the mercy seat, and so much more. With what insight does Paul open this up, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, in the Book of Hebrews. The significance of these pieces and their fulfillment in Him are the focal point of all history. The death of Jesus, whereby He would earn salvation for all His children, was part of God's wonderful council before time began. *"And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him; and His righteousness, it sustained Him"* (Isaiah 59:16). The fulfillment of the temple sacrifice is sung in heaven. *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"* (Revelation 5:12).

Even as a 12-year-old boy, we get a glimpse into His life as we hear of Him sitting in the midst of the religious teachers in Jerusalem. As Wisdom Himself heard these teachers and asked them questions, they were astonished at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:46-47). Later, when His public ministry began and three years later, when it was about to end, He traveled to Jerusalem, entered into the temple, and cleansed it by chasing out the buyers and sellers with the words, *"My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Matthew 21:13).

How full the gospels are of His wonderful works, also in Judea. Let us, however, focus upon a hill to the east of Jerusalem named the Mount of Olives. What are a few of the events recorded in Scripture that transpired here in the life of Christ?

1) From this mountain, Jesus wept as He beheld Jerusalem just a few days before His death. Here He spoke these words, *"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes"* (Luke 19:42). In a short 40 years, all of Jerusalem would be destroyed with about one million slain and the temple burned.

2) From this mountain, Jesus rode into Jerusalem upon a donkey while the children sang, *"Hosanna to the Son of David"* (Matthew 21:9).

3) Upon this mountain, Jesus entered into the agonies of death. *"And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground"* (Luke 22:44).

4) Upon this mountain, Jesus was captured. *"And while He yet spake,*





Picture of the Mount of Olives seen from Jerusalem

<https://www.elal.com/magazine/en/portfolio-items/travel/jerusalem/mount-of-olives/>

*behold a multitude, and He that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss Him” (Luke 22:47).*

5) Upon this mountain, He ascended to heaven. *“And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51).*

6) Upon this mountain, He will come again. *“And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east” (Zechariah 14:4).* Without a miracle of regeneration, no one is ready for this event.

### **Only one name whereby we must be saved**

From the beginning of Scripture to the end, we are taught that humans are dead in sins and trespasses without any righteousness. Therefore, each human stands condemned unless they are hidden behind the righteousness of Christ. *“For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*

We are living in the last days, time will soon end, and therefore we must flee to the refuge set before us. *“And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain” (Isaiah 4:6).*



Picture of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

<https://www.touristisrael.com/mount-of-olives/27213/>

# “What man is he That Liveth, and Shall not see Death?”

(Psalm 89:48)

Various Authors

Following are a few examples and quotations from ministers, most of whom lived only a short time, but whose ministries were very blessed.

## **Rev. Hugh Binning** (1627-1653)

Rev. Hugh Binning entered the University of Glasgow at the age of 14, taught there until the age of 19, and died at the age of 26.

*“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:7).

“Not only is the carnal mind an enemy, but enmity itself. Now, my beloved, if you once believed this, the enmity and opposition of your whole nature against God, you could not but fearfully think what might be the issue of it. You could not bless yourselves as you do, and put the evil day far off; but certainly you would be affrighted with the terror and majesty of that God with whom you have to do, whom, when He awakes to judgment, you can neither resist nor escape; no standing against His wrath, no flying from it out of His dominion, and this would dispose and incline your minds in time to hearken to the treaty of peace, which is holden out in the gospel, and to lay down the weapons of your enmity, and make peace with Him in His Son and Peacemaker.”

“Unbelief is that which condemns the world.”

“It is a common evil of those who hear the gospel, that they are not delivered up to the mold and frame of religion that is holden out in it, but rather bring religion into a mold of their own invention.”

~ From *The Works of Rev. Hugh Binning*

## **Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne** (1813-1843)

Rev. Robert McCheyne was only 21 years old when he became a minister and died when he was 29. He studied at the University of Edinburgh and was licensed to preach in 1835. Rev. McCheyne was a minister in the Church of Scotland from 1835 to 1843.

“It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likenesses to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.”

“Deceit is one of the prime elements of the natural heart. It is more full of deceit than any other object. We sometimes call the sea deceitful. At evening the sea appears perfectly calm, or there is a gentle ripple on the waters, and the wind blows favourably; during the night a storm may come on, and the treacherous waves are like mountain billows, covering the ship. But the heart is deceitful *“above all things”* (Jeremiah 17:9); more treacherous than the treacherous sea. The clouds are often very deceitful. Sometimes, in a time of drought, they promise rain; but they turn out to be clouds without rain, and the farmer is disappointed. Sometimes the clouds appear calm and settled; but before the morning, torrents of rain

are falling. But the heart is deceitful "*above all things.*"

Many animals are deceitful. The serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field; sometimes it will appear quite harmless, but suddenly it will put out its deadly sting and give a mortal wound. But the natural heart is more deceitful than a serpent, "*above all things.*" It is deceitful in two ways, in deceiving others and itself."

"O sirs, you think it a small thing to be Christless this day; you can talk lightly of it, and jeer and jest about it; you can sleep soundly withal; but there is a day coming, when your bitter cry will be heard throughout all the caverns of hell: "Woe is me, I am Christless, I am Christless."

~ From *Gems of Robert Murray McCheyne*

### **Rev. Andrew Grey (1633-1656)**

In his childhood, Rev. Andrew Grey was playful and fond of pleasure, but while he was quite young, his thoughts were suddenly given a serious turn by reflecting on the piety of a beggar whom he met near Leith.

He wrote: "There are three idols that Christians find very hard to mortify, namely, the applause of the world, the pleasures of the world, and the reproaches of the world."

"Without Christ, the most stately palace is a hell. With Christ, the most stinking dungeon is a palace!"

Rev. Grey died in the 22nd year of his life.

### **David Brainerd (1718-1747)**

Noted for his work as an American missionary to Indians in the northeast of the country, Brainerd was not always so inclined. He was raised in a Puritan home but rebelled against much of his upbringing. However, while walking through a forest in his early twenties, he saw himself as a lost sinner in need of salvation.

He entered Yale and then became a licensed minister in 1742. He bravely and devotedly ministered to various Indian tribes for a few short years, despite all sorts of hardships and sufferings. But he died of tuberculosis while just 29. His life and his spiritual diary became well known throughout the world when Jonathan Edwards published *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd* in 1749.

"Further, take heed that you faithfully perform the business you have to do in the world, from a regard to the commands of God; and not from an ambitious desire of being esteemed better than others."

"It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without acting all for God. God Himself could not make him happy any other way ... There is nothing in the world worth living for but doing good and finishing God's work, doing the work that Christ did. I see nothing else in the world that can yield any satisfaction besides living to God, pleasing Him, and doing His whole will."

"Oh! One hour with God infinitely exceeds all the pleasures and delights of this lower world."

# “Will Ye Also Go Away?”

*“From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God”*  
(John 6:66-69).

Rev. Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843)

Both the Bible and experience testify that believers do oftentimes go away from Christ. The same lips that said, *“My Lord, and my God”* (John 20:28) are often found saying, *“I will go after my lovers”* (Hosea 2:7). But this passage plainly shows that it needs but the word of the tender Saviour to reach the heart of the backslider, and he says, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”*

Two reasons are here given why the believer cleaves to Christ.

1. *“Thou hast the words of eternal life.”* To unconverted minds, the words of Christ are hard sayings; to His own, they are tried words—the words of eternal life. The very thing that drives the world away from Christ draws His own disciples closer and closer to Him. The world is offended when it hears of Christ dwelling in the soul—the Christian draws nearer, and says Lord, evermore dwell in me. The world walks no more with Jesus when it hears that it is all of grace—the Christian bows in the dust and blesses God, who alone has made him to differ; *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”* Dear friends, try yourselves by this. Are the words of Christ to you hard sayings, or are they the words of eternal life? Oh! May God enable you to judge fairly of your case.

2. *“We believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Ah! It is this that rivets the believing soul to Christ—the certain conviction that Christ is a divine Saviour. If Christ were only a man like ourselves, then how could He be a Surety for us? He might suffer

in the stead of one man, but how could He suffer in the stead of thousands? Ah! But I believe and am sure that He is the Son of the living God, and therefore I know He is a sufficient Surety for me. To whom else can I go for pardon? If Christ were only a man like ourselves, then how could He dwell in us, or give the Spirit to abide with us forever? But we believe and are sure that He is *“that Christ, the Son of the living God,”* and therefore we know He is able to dwell in us and put the Spirit in us forever. To whom, then, can I go for a new heart but unto Christ? Oh, dear brethren! Have you been thus taught? Then blessed are ye, *“for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). Hold fast by this sure faith—you cannot be too sure, and then you will never, never go away from Christ.

Some of you are wavering in your life, like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; at one time cast upon the shore, at another time running back into the sea. There is no decision about your Christianity or about your holiness. Why is this? It is unbelief. Oh! If you would believe and be sure, then you would never depart from Him. You would say, *“To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.”*



*Robert Murray McCheyne*



# BIBLICAL STANDARDS

## Exchanged for

# MINDLESS CONFORMITY

Submitted by the *Insight Into* editors

Are family and society the creation of man? Indeed not, as these were created by God. It is in the first chapters of Genesis that we hear, “*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*” (Genesis 2:18). God chose to bring into Adam’s life a help that was perfectly fitted for him. She would come from his side for him to tenderly cherish, care for, love, and guide.

The study of a particular individual is not complete unless we include their interactions to the whole. Most of us have been born into families with mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and extended members, including other relatives. Do you appreciate the family God placed you in, especially since He chose to bring you where His Word is heard? Do you consider the special society He has given you if you have praying grandparents and loving parents? Large numbers of people your age have no one who loves them and are fragmented from society. Have you considered the special gift of being under sound religious teaching each Sabbath? This gift is a very rare one in this present world of evil! “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psalm 133:1) under God’s banner.

### Groups in Scripture

Man’s desire to form groups is seen in various places in Scripture. In some instances, it was upon God’s command that groups were formed. A few examples follow:

1. Early in the beginning of time, people began to bind together to worship. “*Then began men to call upon the Name of the LORD*” (Genesis 4:26). The loss of not being able to worship together during COVID-19 has been very painful for some of us. It has led to fragmentation of church life and disruption of what we likely took for granted.

2. The Israelites were broken into 12 groups functioning as a whole in the wilderness. Each had its special place around the tabernacle with each tribe having leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They travelled from place to place in distinct family groups, waiting for the sound of the trumpets. They settled in particular places in Canaan with each tribe in groups never allowed to lose their land to other families or tribes.

3. Paul instructed the Hebrew church to worship together, “*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*” (Hebrews 10:25). Remember how the church is encouraged to sing together in Psalter 419, stanza 1: “Forth from Thy courts, / Thy sacred dwelling, / In jubilant accord, / We hear sweet strains of praises swelling, / O Israel’s mighty Lord!”

Again, recall the words from Psalter 371, stanza 2: “Behold, how pleasant and how good / That we, one Lord confessing, / Together dwell in brotherhood, / Our unity expressing.”

4. The union of true believers makes up Christ’s one “*body*.” “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

### **Need for acceptance in a group can be dangerous**

Humans naturally desire to be part of a group, but there are consequences. Groups can reinforce shared values and groups can help protect the vulnerable. Each person in a group has a unique role to play for the wellbeing of the whole. This can be positive as seen in Psalm 122, where some were encouraging others to go to God’s house. “*Let us go into the house of the LORD*” (verse 1). This can also be terribly destructive as when the wicked of the early world refused to disperse, multiply, and fill the earth in Genesis 11: “*Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly*” (verse 3).

The danger of being in a group is often due to the fact that group leaders may exemplify sinful behaviours that negatively impact individuals who want to be accepted and approved. Joseph’s brothers formed a group very opposed to him to the point that they sought his death in Genesis 37, “*And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams*” (verses 19-20).

A group exerts subtle influence upon its members for good or for bad. Are you in a good peer group? Do your friends strive to hold you to high standards? Are you a real friend when you see one going in the wrong

direction, as Christian sought to keep Hopeful from wandering into the silver mine operated by Demas in *The Pilgrim's Progress*?

### **Societal standards or biblical standard?**

In the present world, there is enormous pressure on people to conform to societal norms that are often contrary to God's Word. Our world rejects the idea that God sets the norms--that His law transcends all human rules and, in fact, man's rules must be subservient to God's rules. In some of our cities, it is illegal to speak against homosexuality. Those who do not conform to societal norms will be punished with fines and imprisonment. Those who do not conform to liberal ideas but espouse conservative biblical thought are silenced by big media. They are shut out of discussion boards and relegated to the sidelines.

One particular danger of "group thinking" is that individuals no longer measure what society is demanding against the unchangeable Word of God. What then takes place is that conformity to the group becomes the new standard and conformity to ageless standards is abandoned. This we find in Judges 20, verse 13. Great folly had taken place in Benjamin which demanded justice. Instead of punishing the evil doers, the tribe of Benjamin acted as a group to defend evil, thereby promoting it.

Mindless conformity to the norms of society, void of God's standard of truth, becomes a recipe for disaster. Do you understand the importance of holding to God's Word as the only standard? We find David sincerely endeavouring to adhere to God's unchangeable Word in Psalm 119, verse 11: "*Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee.*" Wouldn't it be exceedingly important to be grounded in these truths and have them written in our hearts with an indelible pen? Without this, we end up in a quagmire of ever-changing opinions of fallen man whose standards change by the decade. What was considered reprehensible a few years ago is now considered as just another life style!

### **How did the Bible saints remain unmoved?**

Are there Bible saints who remained unmoved as the tides of opinion shifted? How did Abraham survive a world of idolatry in the Book of Genesis? How did Daniel continue when commanded to eat meat served to idols and to forsake daily prayer? How could Moses grow up in Egypt immersed in heathen culture and education? What did all these men have that kept them true to biblical ideals? They had the fear of God in exercise! God's Spirit was powerfully active in them. They were kept by Him alone and not by any strength of their own! The fear of God caused them to "*see*

*Him who is invisible*” (Hebrews 11:27) with Moses and *“eschew evil”* (Job 1:1) with Job.

### **Man’s sad history**

The history of mankind shows our total depravity. In Psalm 14 we read, *“They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (verse 3). Not only have individuals left God, but whole societies have banded together to reject Him. Have we not seen whole nations involved in *“mindless conformity”* in World War II? The German nation in this war became swept into the furor of one who promised prosperity, security, jobs, food, clothing, and national grandeur at the cost and destruction of the Jews, the physically and mentally disabled, gypsies, and anyone who stood in his way to a world empire. Hitler was a godless leader who sought to even use what was termed *“positive Christianity”* for his purposes. Hitler used propaganda, false promises, and education to convince a large bulk of the nation to forsake common sense and Christian truth and to embark upon a journey of madness and wickedness. Just consider the atrocities in the concentration camps where humans were exterminated as pests.

### **What is to come?**

What is in store for this fallen world? Doesn’t Revelation warn us of days when those who do not conform to evil rulers and do not have *“the mark, or the name of the beast”* will not be able to buy and sell (Revelation 13:17)? Does this mean that they will be shunned and relegated to the sidelines of society? Is it not high time to flee to the refuge set before us and beg for grace? Is there anything of more importance than being reconciled to God and being covered with His righteousness?

*“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.”*  
(Hebrews 12:1)



# Seeking for Happiness

Rev. A. M. den Boer (1929 -2004)

## **Seeking for happiness in pleasure**

One of the great questions in our society is, “Where do I find the greatest happiness?” Man cannot find it in his life anymore. He has lost the true happiness in Paradise, and therefore in different ways we are trying to fill that emptiness in our life. We see that the majority of the inhabitants of this world seek the pleasures of this world. They sacrifice their money, their time, and often also their health and their honour, in order to enjoy themselves. We have the well-known example in the Bible of the prodigal son. He asked his father if he might receive his portion of the inheritance, and then he went into a far country. There he had what the world calls a good time, but a moment came that his money was gone, there was no food anymore, and he became hungry. When we seek the pleasures of this world, we will be just as disappointed as the prodigal son was, because we will see that they cannot fill our hearts with true happiness.

## **Seeking happiness in riches and knowledge**

There are other people who have a different goal in their life. They think, “If I were rich, I would be happy.” Thus they toil from morning to evening in order to increase their goods. They never have enough. In such a way they continue in their life. We have the example of the rich fool who also had big plans, but the end was that his life was taken away. Henry Ford, the man so well-known in the automobile industry, said, “When I was working as a workman, I was happier than when I became a millionaire.” Likewise, there are many other names that could be mentioned from history. There are people who seek their happiness in science and in art. The more we know, the more we will realize how little we know. In all these ways, we do not come to true happiness either.



## Seeking for happiness in self-glory

There are people who seek their happiness in honour and respect. But we know from history that this does not always work and that it is not a guarantee for happiness in our life. When we think of Nebuchadnezzar, it was before the end of his life that he lost his glory. From more recent history, Napoleon, that mighty emperor of France, lost everything. Adolph Hitler, a man worshipped by the Germans, lost his honour, his glory, and his possessions.

## What happiness consists of

The world does not offer us true happiness. Today this question is raised, “Is there then no place where we can find true happiness?” A definition is given that happiness consists of three things: first, something to love; secondly, something to do; and thirdly, something to hope for. In answer to the question, “Is there a place where we can find happiness?” I believe that for the believer, the Mediator is the One whom he loves above all; secondly, it is His service that he likes to do; and thirdly, that His eternal fellowship will be given unto him. Is there a place where we can find true happiness? I believe that we may confirm the answer to that question. We can find it in that only Name that is given under heaven whereby we must be saved.

### *“Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom”*

Therefore, it is a serious warning not to go in the wrong direction, and not to trust in our own strength, in our own works, and in our self-righteousness, but to trust in that gospel, which is a lovely gospel if the Lord will open it for us. There we hear that there is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. It is the only way, it is the only possibility, and that gives true happiness. *“Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom”* (Proverbs 3:13).

We have written about it also in the beginning of our meditation. Often we think that happiness is in wealth, but that is not true. I think of a history that I have read. The Secretary of State of Ireland drove through London with his wife on a certain day, and as they were passing a magnificent mansion, his wife asked him, “Who is the happy owner of this beautiful home?” And then her husband mentioned the name, but he added, “With all his wealth, he is probably not a happy man.” It was later that he heard that at that same hour he had said those words, that man, being on a ship, had jumped overboard and drowned, and had thus ended his unhappy life. Wealth does not bring happiness. It is only in the Saviour that we can find it. *“Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD”* (Psalm 144:15).