

# Insight Into



September / October 2021

*“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).*

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# 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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# MEDITATION

## Self-Examination

*“Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry? ...  
And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death”*  
(Jonah 4:4, 9).

Rev. H. de Leeuw

Self-pity is an awful sin. It is a sin that, by nature, lays within all of our hearts. Self-pity is a clear sign of pride taken to the next level; a level to express our feelings to ourselves or someone else. In this text the Lord is asking Jonah to examine his self-pity.

How is he called to examine? *“Doest thou well?”* This means he is asked about his actions. What were his actions? Throughout this little Bible book, you read numerous times of Jonah’s actions. They all had results! His disobedience brought him into a great storm. By way of a one-sided and God-glorifying wonder, he was preserved. His preaching to Nineveh was used by the Lord to give a great turning and breaking from sin (temporarily) there. But Jonah was displeased and very angry!

In his anger he prayed unto the Lord. Self-pity can be so religious! This prayer was not as sweet incense but was a stench in God’s nostrils. Jonah’s prayer was filled with pride and self-pity. It had been so different in the whale’s belly! Jonah’s religious affections are now guided by his self-pity. This seeks to honour and maintain self! The Lord has a question about that for Jonah: *“Doest thou well to be angry?”*

Jonah thinks highly of himself: He asks to die! Self-pity fills a person with ungodly boldness. With this dying he meant he did not want to see the results of God’s merciful dealings with an enemy nation. By asking to die, Jonah is telling the Lord that he is finished with his earthly course. Self-pity tries to direct the secret things of the Lord. Jonah, *“Doest thou well to be angry?”*

Self-pity takes advantage of God’s providence. It is always claimed as wonderful and marvelous. The gourd was also in the Lord’s providence over Jonah. With that gourd he was exceedingly glad! However, God also provided for the worm the next day. But then

the providence of the Lord was not bearable. Self-pity tries to direct God's providence!

Jonah is called to examine himself. Self-pity has the answer; he does well to be angry. What needs to happen? The Lord needs to instruct. So much self-examination takes the Bible and uses it for the maintaining of self. But the Holy Spirit must strip us of self.

Jonah receives instruction. *"Then said the LORD."* The word "then" is particularly important here. The Lord is going to bring home the sin of self-pity in the life of Jonah. Dear reader, the Lord is not a respecter of persons. Nowadays we must be politically correct. But the Holy Spirit is right to the point. He does not spare the flesh. An Israelite is going to be instructed about his enemies. A prophet of the Lord is going to receive a lesson regarding the compassion of the Lord.

Self-pity is the sin that lifts us above others. We have it worse than others when we have not considered what others have to say to us. The Lord calls to examine it! For true self-examination, the Lord must instruct us; otherwise, we will lean on our self-pity to justify ourselves. Many opinions are formed, many truths twisted, many friends are consulted, only for the simple fact because we pity ourselves! Then I close with a question: *"Doest thou well?"*

"For if [a Christian] cannot thank and praise God as well in calamities and sufferings as in prosperity and happiness, he is as far from the piety of a Christian as he that only loves them that love him is from the charity of a Christian. For to thank God only for such things as you like is no more a proper act of piety than to believe only what you see is an act of faith. Resignation and thanksgiving to God are only acts of piety when they are acts of faith, trust, and confidence in the divine goodness."

~ William Law (1686-1761)

"In thanking God, we fasten upon His favours to us; in praising and adoring God, we fasten upon His perfections in Himself."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

# TOXIC FUMES!



*What a lot of smoke! A factory is on fire. Firefighters rush back and forth. The police send people home: “Stay away from these poisonous toxic fumes!”*

A. Janse-Pieterman

Suggested Reading: 1 John 2:1-16

May I warn you today about other toxic fumes, which I hope you are not inhaling yet? As a mother, I was very shocked that children about eight years old already know pop music songs through older brothers, sisters, or classmates. Maybe you do, too? What a power of the devil! The evil one is poisoning you very slowly in this way. The younger the better, he thinks. In the songs and with the rhythm, the evil one says: “Have fun and don’t think about tomorrow. Forget your worries. Enjoy this world with your whole body. Don’t let anyone tell you what to do. You can do whatever you want!”

If you place the Ten Commandments next to these songs, there won’t be one left for you to listen to. Don’t give your life to inhale those fumes! The Lord cries out to you, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*” (1 John 2:15). Then you may sometimes feel alone, because you feel that you do not want to be of this world. Because then the Lord will take care of you! Ask Him to work powerfully in your heart with His Spirit. If you love the Lord, then you abhor everything that has nothing to do with Him and His service. Then you long to be able to live for Him and to be able to praise Him forever! “*How blessed are the people that harken unto Thy sounds*” (Dutch Psalm 89:7, rhymed).

May I seriously ask you not to listen to pop music songs? Don’t be influenced. Ask the Lord every day if you will never enter this realm of the evil one. Stay away from these poisonous toxic fumes!

~ Translated from *De Saambinder*, with editing by the *Insight Into* editors



# The Misuse of Blessings

Rev. M. Romeyn (1913-1971)

“If the Lord reigns according to His counsel, and nobody is able to do anything without the co-operation of God, why did God give man the ability to invent the television, atomic power, and travelling to the moon, etc.?” Dear friends, this question refers to the misuse of the blessings given to us. You must understand that every one of us is responsible for how we use the blessings, and you must understand that the Lord is free from us if we spend His blessings wrongfully. For good things we like to take the credit ourselves, and for bad things we will try to blame someone else. To pronounce oneself guilty is the most impossible for man to do. When Adam (the head of the Covenant of Works) broke the Covenant by disobedience, the Lord asked him in Genesis 3:11, *“Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?”* Adam’s answer was: *“The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat”* (Genesis 3:12).

Adam was created good and made able to resist temptation. His calling was to obey his Creator. The Lord had given him plentiful reasons to obey. He was placed as the crown jewel of God’s creation. He was so highly favoured above many other creatures. And what did he answer the Lord when he was called upon to give an account of his disobedience? He said, *“The woman whom Thou gavest.”* It is the sad fruit of the fall in Adam that man uses the blessings given to him in disobedience and works out his own destruction. Cain did kill his brother Abel. Would it not be unfair if I would ask, “Why did God give health and strength to Cain, that he was able to kill his brother?” If we ask the question, why did Cain kill Abel,

the answer must be that Cain was conceived and born in sin, and by nature inclined to hate God and his brother. If man was not fallen, television could be a blessing, but how is it used now? If sin would be taken out of television, people would not be able to sell it to the stones of the street. Atomic power could be a blessing for mankind, but now it is prepared for war purposes, and the nations are afraid to be destroyed by the tremendous power. It is to be feared that man shall not be satisfied; now he is permitted to land on the moon, and when will he stop? Only if he is stopped by the might of God.

Jesus said in Matthew 22:37, *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”* The Lord has a perfect right to expect from His creatures that they would do this. And by nature we are inclined to do the opposite. This is displeasing to our Creator and very harmful for His creatures. Now we could ask the same question, *“Why did God give people the ability not to love Him?”* The Lord created man good, with the ability to love Him and to fear Him, but by disobedience he lost this ability. Young friends, may I give you a simple example? Would any father or mother be pleased if their children love them because they were not able to do otherwise? Would it be a joy if someone loves you dearly, because they are forced to do so? So the Lord is pleased if we love Him according to the desire of our hearts. God’s people love the Lord. The Lord has a willing people in the day of His power. This is not according to the ability of His people, but it is according to His love poured out in their soul. In 1 John 4:19, we read, *“We love Him, because He first loved us.”* May the Lord remember us all in mercy, and incline our hearts to pray for this blessing of Blessings.

“Prayer is an earnest and familiar talking with God, to whom we declare all our miseries, whose support and help we implore and desire in our adversities and whom we laud and praise for our benefits received. So that prayer contains the exposition of our sorrows, the desire of God’s defence, and the praising of His magnificent name, as the Psalms of David clearly do teach.”

~ Rev. John Knox (1514-1572)



# Nobody Likes a Rat

(Part 2)

Rev. E. C. Adams

These words were the heading of an article in a local newspaper that caught my attention. I hope they have also caught yours, and therefore you will continue reading. We hope to glean some important and profound lessons. Much instruction can be learned from the animal world, and from happenings that take place in daily life. Job has said in Job 12:7, *“But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee.”* Jesus has also used many examples out of nature in His parables as He taught the people. We only have to think of the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, and the unfruitful fig tree of Luke 13, to mention a few. Solomon has also given instruction in Proverbs 30:24-28 concerning the ants, the conies, the locusts, and the spider.

## **Pronounced and touching resemblances**

1. Rats love the darkness better than the light. They especially roam and travel in the dark. Ephesians 6:12 states, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.”*

2. Rats are very persistent. How persistent is temptation under the instigation of the devil? In Judges 16:16, we read that Samson’s soul was vexed even unto death.

3. Rats do an immense amount of damage, and once they have entered, the evidences become visible. Let us mention an accusing and troubled conscience. What troubles, anxiety, unrest, distrust, lovelessness, and even hatred has come in families because they have placed themselves in the way of temptation, perhaps beginning only with one temptation. The sword would not depart from David’s house after he had taken Bathsheba and killed Uriah.

4. Rats enter through the smallest cracks or holes. Many times just one impure thought, one wrong desire, or a time of idleness or curiosity is the beginning of falling into great sin. Yet, I have read that there is a difference between brown rats being fierce and aggressive and black rats being milder. Likewise, some temptations are very daring and bold, and others come in more subtle ways. The devil is compared to a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8, but is called an angel of light in 2 Corinthians 11:14.

5. Rats breed abundantly and, under ideal conditions, mate all year, where

the female can give birth to three to six litters a year, each litter consisting of six to nine pups. So also with sin. Sin is a slippery slope. One sin needs another to cover the first. One sin pleads for another. James 1:15 mentions this with, *“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* Think of the brothers of Joseph after they sold him in Genesis 37. They needed a lie to cover up their sin of selling their brother.

6. Rats are the cause of much disease. What troubles, anxiety, unrest, distrust, lovelessness, and hatred have come in the world because of sin. Job 14:1 says, *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”*

7. Rats have been the cause of much death and misery, since they are carriers of diverse diseases. Romans 6:23 confirms that *“the wages of sin is death.”*

8. We need eyes and light to see these rodents. Many times we see their damage but not the animal. So also, many see and realize the consequences, but they see not how horrible the beast of sin is. They have not learned that they have sinned against a holy but also a good-doing God. The prayer of Elisha for his servant is indispensable, as we read in 2 Kings 6:17: *“LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.”*

9. Once rats have entered, it is difficult to eradicate them. With sin it is not only difficult but impossible. Romans 5:12 states, *“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”* It is an unfathomable wonder that God’s Word proclaims they can be forgiven through the meditorial work of Jesus Christ.

10. We would be quite distressed and uncomfortable if even one rat had entered and found a dwelling place in our bedroom, hiding in some secret place. It would indeed be an eerie feeling to have a rat crawl over you in the night, or even have a rat resting at your bed side. And yet many seem to have a rat lying on their night table. Then, my young friend, you realize I am not speaking about your Bible, which you read every day.

Our condition is much more dangerous than a field of grain, or a pantry of groceries, since we are dead objects without mind or desire. Through our deep fall in Adam, much vermin already lives in our heart (Matthew 15:19). Oh, what a fountain of corruption (Jeremiah 17:9). It is true many times it perhaps seems our rats are sleeping in the deep and dark recesses of our heart, and natural man has not so much trouble with them. Perhaps our speaking conscience is used as a means to subdue them. The living child of God sometimes thinks or hopes at times that the rats have been driven out. What a disappointment for the true church to realize the evils of their heart, their weakness, and the power of the mortal enemies. This need, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, causes them to flee to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:24).

*(To be continued, the Lord willing)*

# Looking Around Us

## At the Heart of Every Community?

*From the Free Presbyterian Church  
The Young People's Magazine*

Earlier this year, The Old Forge, the remotest pub on the British mainland, was for sale. It is in the village of Inverie, which is on the Knoydart Peninsula in Lochaber, in the west of Scotland. The only way of reaching the village is by walking 18 miles (29 km.) or by taking a seven-mile (11 km.) trip by sea.

“Pubs are at the heart of every community, and it is no different in Knoydart.” So said a leader of the group seeking to bring The Old Forge into the ownership of the local community. It is a great pity that it is a pub that should be considered the central point of any community. Pubs have been such a source of drunkenness, which so often leads to other serious sins. To give up control of one’s thinking through alcohol or drugs is a serious sin. Even to weaken that control is wrong.

Solomon wisely asks, “*Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?*” And his answer is the right one, “*They that tarry long at the wine*” (Proverbs 23:29-30).

What should be at the heart of a community? A church. But not just any church—certainly not a church which rejects the Bible and the beliefs and the practices that God reveals to us in that precious book. What we should wish to see at the heart of every community is a church faithful to the Word of God, where the people of God in that town or village or city district can go to worship God, to learn more about the truth and to get good for their souls. This would be a church where unconverted people also could come—and ought to come—with a conviction that what they will hear is true, and that it has authority because it faithfully reflects what God has revealed.

Churches like this are not generally at the heart of communities today, because most people do not welcome the truths of God’s Word. They have not been born again; so they do not love God and do not value spiritual things. They do not enjoy hearing about God; they do not see how serious it

is to be a sinner, and so they do not feel their need of the glorious salvation that God has provided through His Son Jesus Christ.

Many of them would much prefer to waste their Sabbaths in foolish, ungodly conversation in a pub than listen to the glorious gospel in a church, which would point them to the way of salvation. This salvation has benefits even for this life. Paul told Timothy that “*godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is,*” but especially “*of that [life] which is to come*” (1 Timothy 4:8). With eternity before us, how earnest we should be to make good use of our time in this world! How urgently we should feel our need of salvation, so that we may enjoy a happy eternity rather than go down to the “*blackness of darkness for ever*” (Jude 13).

***“Labour Therefore to Enter into that Rest”***

(Hebrews 4:11).

“How a man ought to worry that he may receive a good dying day! How much we should put all our efforts into this, that at one time we may enter into that rest. One day our place here will be empty. Someone else shall take our place and take over our work. Someone else shall possess our things, shall walk in our street, and dwell in our home. And where will we be then? Do we know if it is well between God and our soul? Did we learn to seek peace in the blood of Jesus?”

Have we been taught to fight the good fight of faith? Did we learn to take hold of eternal life? Does our soul long after the rest, which, at one time, shall be the blessed lot of all the people of God?

How sad is it when we think so little of this. Most of the time we are too busy with the earthly things, so that we have no time to think of the heavenly things. We talk and cry, laugh and mock, run, sweat, and worry, buy and rent, sleep and watch, strive, read, write, eat and drink; and among all this business, that needful lesson of the apostle is easily forgotten. “*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.*” That this all may change for the good! May we learn to strive to enter in through the strait gate!”

*Exh. Wulfert Floor (1818-1876)*



# Singing in the Congregation

*“In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).*

Rev. C. Hogchem

It was always a pleasure to listen to the singing of the congregations: the muffled singing of a penitential psalm, calm, humbleness when it was a prayer, the jubilant noise of gladness with the organ “everywhere”; and not to forget the beautiful upper voices in Genemuiden, The Netherlands.

No, it has nothing to do with art. I also do not read in Lord’s Day 38 that we on the Sabbath Day go up to the congregation to sing; a little sobriety has its place, but yet. Sadly, congregational singing this past year has dwindled down to a shadow of what was a magnificent sound. The small number of people that are present at worship services is determined by the elimination capacity. Who had ever thought about such a decisive factor? We must heed to sing modestly. How often this has been emphasized in many congregations? Small droplets cause the virus to spread. The result is, however, that congregational singing has become a singing with no rising or falling in pitch and staying on the same tone all the time, as if we were singing in a secret gathering. Sometimes children’s voices come through very clearly. It is so nice to hear that.

## **Singing is sensitive**

When singing takes place now, then it is only one verse on each occasion. Here and there are changes: The first verse is sung by the men, the next one by the woman. In order to avoid mistakes, the Psalter board mentions it with an “M” or an “F.”

In some congregations, it is only the consistory that sings, or a group of singers sitting in the organ gallery. Or the small group in attendance sings modestly with masks on. If the degree of contamination is high, then many places have converted from singing along, to reading along. They then sing, we may say, inwardly, while the sound of the organ can be heard. And so everyone strives to do what is necessary under the present circumstances. Also the organists thoroughly understand that many people listen more conscientiously to their playing than before.

Yet, all together, compared with the past, it has become more wearisome and bleaker, somewhat unmistakably dreary. Now that this singing which we have always taken for granted cannot be done in the usual way anymore, then we realize how pleasant it really was. When we lack something, we learn to appreciate it so much more.

### **Singing at home**

Hopefully the temporary loss of the beautiful congregational singing can also have its benefits. For example, when we in this time often listen at home, we may also learn to sing together again. That would be a profit. After all, the singing of Psalters in the living room had become very rare; and then to think that this is even nicer than the singing of Psalters together in church. Hopefully progress has been made on this point--something to continue on with.

The way we sing now has been greatly watered down. We have been, as it were, brought back to the essence of the matter, to the words and to the content of the Psalters. We liked to sing, but often thoughtlessly. And now? Even though the outward glow of singing has faded, have you also started to pay more attention to what you sing? Maybe with the question in your heart: Do I understand what I am singing?

We read in Colossians 3:16: "*Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*" Wilhelmus à Brakel writes in his *The Christian's Reasonable Service*: "However, our voice and the melody in and of themselves are not pleasing to God; rather, it is the motion of the heart relative to the spiritual matters which we express before the Lord in singing which pleases Him" (Volume 4, Chapter 79).

### **Trying circumstances**

The circumstance which we find ourselves in are trying conditions. Then there is a great danger of giving in to the dissatisfaction, slackening, and laziness, and to despondency and self-love. Quarrels and divisions can also easily arise about all kinds of things, such as singing.

Let us remember that we are still left with many things; the preaching of the justice and grace may still sound. Who would exist if the Lord passed through and took everything away from us? Also remember those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake and are usually unable to hold church services. How would we spend Sunday if it was no longer possible to go to church because of persecution?

May the Lord bless us with the experiencing of our guilt. May He in His wrath remember us in mercy and grant that we may once again go up to His house in unity. May the words of the Psalms be especially recognized as matters of God's grace. To confess with David, "*Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage*" (Psalm 119:54).

~ Translated from *De Saambinder* 20/05/2021

# The Future of Young People Lies in the Church

*We all have concerns for tomorrow. The coronavirus pandemic continues. The threat of serious illness and death is still there. In most congregations, only a limited number of people can attend church. Our young people feel less connected to the congregation. What will become of them?*

L. A. Kroon

Young people are the generation of tomorrow, but this cannot be taken for granted. More than ever, the relationship between the youth and the church is under tension. How will we bind them if they come to church so infrequently? But what if we turn it around and say that the church is the future of young people? Maybe that's what makes the difference: A church that is convinced to the bottom of its heart that the church is the future for young people.

## **Biblical concern for tomorrow**

That future has no foundation in ourselves or in our young people. They have been given our heart. They are children of wrath, who cannot come into the kingdom of God without the new birth by the Holy Spirit. Only sheltered in the Saviour do our young people have a real future. And the Lord has promised to work that miracle in the new generations. *"A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation"* (Psalm 22:30). That is God's care for tomorrow which, if all goes well, also encourages us to care for young people. For the Lord works sovereignly and irresistibly in the hearts of sinners by His Spirit, but thereby makes use of the means of grace which He places in the church in the hands of office-bearers, parents, and leaders.

## **Justified concerns**

When the youth are discussed in church, I sometimes hear from God's children of hope for posterity. Yet it also quickly turns to worry, and we have justified concerns for tomorrow. We see young people making wrong choices, especially when it comes to the division between the world and the church. We hear from young people who pray little, do not experience

the work of the Lord, hardly read the Bible personally and, because of this coronavirus crisis, lose their connection with the church.

Yet we should not stop there. We are called to connect young people to the church and to the Word of God, especially when things become difficult or in uncertain times.

And what does this mean for the congregation and the concern for the youth? As far as we are concerned, it is primarily about a sense of urgency. Young people today need our care for tomorrow. Let's tell young people that their future is in the church, because God is working there in His grace for His future. In addition, training is needed to give shape to the care of young people. The whole congregation should be involved in this.

### **To whom honour is due**

We cannot make the deepest connection to the Lord and His church, as that is worked by the Lord, to whom honour is due. We must and may attribute renewal of the heart and life to the Holy Spirit, who in secret calls dead sinners to life and works in them the faith in Christ. The church is the place where the Lord works. The church is a good place for young people to be. It is the future, especially for the youth. And with that confidence we can initiate our young people. That is our concern for the future.

~ Translated with editing from *De Saambinder*

“True gratitude or thankfulness to God for His kindness to us, arises from a foundation laid before, of love to God for what He is in Himself; whereas a natural gratitude has no such antecedent foundation.”

~ Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“Gratitude is the return justly required from the objects of His beneficence; yet it is often withheld from our great Benefactor simply because His goodness is so constant and so abundant. It is lightly esteemed, because it is exercised toward us in the common course of events. It is not felt, because we daily experience it.”

~ Rev. A. W. Pink (1886-1952)

“We are surrounded by God's benefits. The best use of these benefits is an unceasing expression of gratitude.”

~ John Calvin (1509-1564)

# Faith

Rev. C. Vogelaar

There was a very urgent need that brought the Canaanitish woman to the Lord Jesus. This happened after He had “*departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon*” (Matthew 15:22). The great need was the one of her daughter who was grievously vexed with a devil and no one could help her. She came by faith to the only Physician who could help. But what is this faith really? Some speak about faith and coming to Jesus in a way that it looks like it is an easy accomplishment of man and they don’t seem to be afraid that this may mislead people. Also you, my young friends, may meet or hear people who say that you should just go to Jesus and you will be alright and saved.

Is it then not true that coming to Jesus will never disappoint one who may do so? Didn’t He say Himself, “*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28)? And didn’t He promise, “*Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out*” (John 6:37)? Yes, that’s true, but what does this coming or believing in Jesus imply? What is the meaning, and what are the characteristics of it?

For as you know, there is also *historical* faith, when you believe the truth revealed in God’s Word with your mind only. King Agrippa in Acts 26:27 is an example of this.

There is *temporary* faith as well. This looks more promising than historical faith, for it may affect the emotions and become apparent in strong feelings. Seed that was thrown upon stony ground (Matthew 13) is an example of this. The surface may change, but the heart is not renewed.

There is also *miraculous* faith that gives you a strong persuasion that a miracle will be performed either by or on you. When the ten lepers were sent away to go to the priest to be examined, they obeyed and believed that they would be cured.

How can we know if our faith is *saving*? It is certainly not something we make or accomplish, as we can read in Ephesians 2:8, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*”

## The meaning

In the original language of the Bible, that is Hebrew in the Old Testament, you find different words which imply with confidence resting on something or somebody. It is to lean upon with confidence. I remember how my instructor in the theological school, Rev. Vergunst Sr., once gave us an example. He had been in West Irian (New Guinea) to visit the mission field. On one of the trips, as he made his way through the tropical forest, he had to cross a deep ravine via something that looked like a bridge made from tree branches, but it looked very shaky. He hesitated and wondered, “Will it hold my weight?” which was considerably more than that of his native guide. Finally he was persuaded that it would hold him up. That is faith. However, in order to truly trust in, or to lean upon Him, every ground outside of Christ has to be taken away from us. Did that

happen to you already? This is a painful matter for our flesh, but necessary and profitable.

In the New Testament is a word that has about the same meaning: confide in, trust in, having confidence in something. Scripture describes faith as hungering and thirsting, eating and drinking, or looking to the Lord. There is faith that takes refuge, as one of the original words implies, but also faith that may embrace, and take hold of what the Lord has spoken. There is weak but also more assured faith. An example of what faith is can be found in Matthew 15:21-28, the history of the Canaanitish woman. You see in her three characteristics of what true faith is. There is:

1. Knowledge, for she said, "*O Lord, Thou Son of David*" (vs. 22). The Holy Spirit had revealed to her that this wonderful Prophet was the promised Messiah, David's great Son.
2. Assent or agreement. This became evident when she said, "*Truth Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table*" (vs. 27). The Canaanitish woman meant as it were: "It is so; I am nothing but an unclean dog." But then we read that wonderful word *yet*, a word of trust. She agreed that Christ had everything and could give it to her, even if she was nothing.
3. Confidence and trust, in spite of the trials she met. First, He did not even give her an answer. Then the disciples said, "*Send her away*" (vs. 23). After this, He said, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (vs. 24). Finally, He said that it would not be right "*to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs*" (vs. 26), and she was one of them. Yet, she pleaded upon His own words.

There *was* bread and she had such a hunger, only a crumb would be a wonder to her, but please give me such a crumb. The Lord Jesus called this "*great faith*" and she was not sent away empty.

My young people, I hope that you are jealous of this woman and that you may understand that this is true faith. She knew her real need, not from a book, but she had painfully experienced it. She also knew that there was but One who could help her. She had heard about Him and she saw with eyes of faith Him as the promised Messiah. She could not let Him go, did not protest when she was compared with a dog, and pleaded upon His own words that He Himself had spoken. That is now true faith in which we are brought so low that we do not have any rights anymore, but that draws him or her irresistibly to that great Redeemer. A crumb of grace, a token from Him, is what she needed. In true faith there is always a deep love. The heart hungers and thirsts in all its unworthiness for His grace and mercy. It is not about His gifts only, but it needs Him Himself to satisfy its hunger, to give it peace. Presumption makes one big and important, a good Christian in his own eyes, but true faith humbles, makes you poor, so poor that you can only beg and plead as a little dog. True faith cannot rest until it has found and received what the needy heart desires.

I hope, dear young people, that you may by experience learn to understand what true faith is, and like this woman, poor and needy, come to the feet of Him who also today does not send away those that take refuge unto Him.

# What Movies Cannot Do!

A Pastoral Letter  
from Rev. P. van Ruitenburg

Dear young friends,

If you had to write a journal about what you did with the extra time you had during this pandemic, and what it reveals about your soul, what would you write down? Specifically, ask yourself: “What do my “spare time” habits reveal about myself?”

Have we used the extra time we have received wisely? In many ways the pandemic has been a blessing in the sense that families have more time together. We have more time to listen to sermons or read good books. But as with everything in this life, we have had to make choices with the extra time we received.

Did you know that if you read your Bible just 10 minutes a day, you will have read the Bible a total of 60 hours a year? That is a lot of hours! Look at the screen time feature on your phone. How much time have you spent on the news and social media? Do you spend any of your precious time watching movies? Take that time and see how many hours that is in a year. Would you feel discomfort if God asked on Judgment Day if you used the extra time that was given wisely?

I want to challenge you on your use of free time in terms of media. How much time do you spend on perusing the news? Is there something wrong with reading the news? No, but certainly you must agree that news feeds are infinite in scope and variety. There is no end to news stories and no end to facts that may simply be crowding your mind but in the end do you no real good.

How about social media? Is there any real gain? It would be one thing to use social media to seek the wellbeing of one another and share personal struggles and needs. However, for many, social media amount to endless hours being wasted filled with gossip, nonsense, and sinful enticement.

How about movie media? This is a dangerous realm where evil takes on a whole different and much more powerful dimension. In movies, evil is opened to the eye gate. How dangerous is this road and one to flee from. It was through eye gate that our first parents fell in Paradise and David descended into a pit of self-destruction. Is there a single commandment that the typical movie does not violate? Flee this realm with all your strength. Do these three forms of media bring you closer to God or take you further away from Him? As I was thinking about writing this, I came across this

question: “Why would I say that a person who devotes their discretionary time, especially stressful times, to eating and sleeping and watching movies rather than, say, to edifying reading, meditating, praying over God’s Word, and over the rich food of good books that mature and insightful people have written over the centuries, as well as other wholesome tasks— why would I say that such a person does not love and trust God the way they should?”

And the answer is this: Because loving God means that God holds a place of value in our heart that makes us want to know Him, and enjoy Him, and be near Him. Movies are not well designed to do that. In fact, most of them are well designed to hinder that and to undermine the very thing that the love of God implies, namely, a passion to know Him, to enjoy Him, and to be close to Him. Movies do not have that effect.

Therefore, defaulting to movies is at least a sign that love for God is weak and probably growing weaker. I would say it also might prove you have no love for God at all.

I also found this quote: “The Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy has been offered us. This is similar to an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum, because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

Consider that quote. Do not settle for so little; settle for lasting joy! Do we prefer “mud”? Cut out the entertainments in your life that almost always glorify and celebrate sin that God hates, and turn towards the things that God loves and that will also give you real joy. Cancel your subscription to Netflix and others. Repent and “*turn ye, turn ye*” (Ezekiel 33:11). Parents, be aware of what your children are watching.

What movies cannot do! Consider that sentence and think of your true need. One thing is needful!

*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

*“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me”* (Psalm 101:3).

*“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (Romans 12:2).

*“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (Romans 13:13-14).

*“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil”* (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).