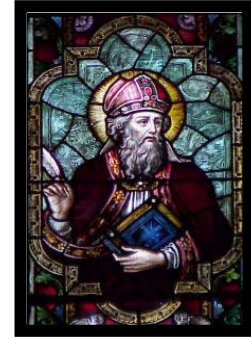


Augustine of Hippo

354- 430

Great Christians of History



Before there was a Thomas Aquinas, a Martin Luther, a John Calvin, a Jonathan Edwards or a Charles Spurgeon, there was Augustine. Augustine was arguably the igniter of Western Civilization. Catholics claim him as one of their saints- for he was one of the great leaders in Catholicism. Protestants claim him as the original leader of the Reformation. It was his writings that profoundly moved the likes of Martin Luther and John Calvin.

There are many things I appreciate about the life of Augustine. His story is a great encouragement to mothers and wives of unbelievers. Monica- Augustine's mother- was married to a man who did not share Christian convictions. But she fervently prayed for her son's conversion to Christ and God answered her prayer.

Augustine was one of the first to crystallize the writings of Paul on justification. Augustine's understanding was that we are only justified before a holy God by undeserved grace that comes through Christ alone. This understanding lit the fire of the five solas of the Protestant Reformation: Scripture alone; Christ alone; Grace alone; Faith alone; God's glory alone.

But to Augustine these ideas did not diminish the need to strive daily for a holy life before God. The great 19th century preacher- Charles Spurgeon- was once asked how he reconciled the sovereignty of God with his fervent preaching on holiness. Spurgeon replied, "I do not need to reconcile friends." For Augustine and all who have understood biblical Christianity, grace and holiness are inseparable- not mutually exclusive concepts.

Augustine was also painfully honest about his struggles with sin. Anyone who has read the *Confessions* will see the warfare that he waged against his sexual lust. Augustine was one of the giants who allow us to capture a clearer view of Christ by standing on their shoulders. There are many books to read about Augustine. I recommend Peter Brown's biography- *Augustine of Hippo*. The two most influential of Augustine's writings are: *Confessions* and the *City of God*. John Piper has a great series on tape, cd or mp3 on many Christian leaders throughout history- *Men of Whom the World Was Not Worthy*. His biographical speech on Augustine is one of the highlights of this series.

Many in the world pursue wealth, power and sex as life's ultimate goal as Augustine did prior to his conversion. They are sowing a crop of bitter disappointment. They need to heed the words of Augustine, "Oh, My God, You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in You."