

# Milk & Honey

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*Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ*

## The Man of God

C. H. Macintosh

*That the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:17*

### PART II: A MAN IN CHRIST

To all whose eyes have been opened to see their true condition by nature, who have been brought under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, who know something of the real meaning of a broken heart and a contrite spirit – to all such it must be of the deepest possible interest to know the divine secret of rest and peace. If it be true – and it is true, because God says it – that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God,” then how is any one to get out of the flesh? How can he pass off the platform of nature? How can he reach the blessed position of those to whom the Holy Spirit declares, “Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit?”

These are momentous questions, surely. For, be it thoroughly known and ever remembered, that no improvement of our old nature is of any value whatsoever as to our standing before God. It may be all very well, so far as this life is concerned, for a man to improve himself by every means within his reach, to cultivate his mind, furnish his memory, elevate his moral tone, advance his social position. All this is quite true, so true as not to need a moment’s argument.

But, admitting in the fullest manner the truth of all this, it leaves wholly untouched the solemn and sweeping statement of the inspired apostle that, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” There must be a new standing altogether, and this new standing cannot be reached by any change in the old nature – by any doing or formalities, feelings, ordinances of religion, prayers, alms or sacraments. Do what you will with nature and it is nature still. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”; and do what you will with flesh you cannot make it spirit. There must be a new life – a life flowing from the new man, the last Adam, who had become, in resurrection, the Head of a new race.

How is this most precious life to be had? Hear the memorable answer – hear it and live. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

Here we have a total change of standing; a passing from death to life; from a position in which there is not so much as a single link with Heaven, with the new creation, with the risen Man in glory, into a position in which there is not a single link with the first man, with the old creation, and this present evil world. And all this is through believing on the Son of God – not saying we believe, but really, truly, heartily, believing on the Son of God; not by a mere intellectual faith, but believing with the heart.

Thus only does anyone become A MAN IN CHRIST.

Every true believer is a man in Christ. Whether it be the convert of yesterday or the hoary-headed saint of fifty or sixty years’ standing as a Christian, each stands in precisely the same blessed position – he is in Christ. There can be no difference here. The practical state may differ immensely; but the positive standing is one and the same. As on the platform of nature, you may meet with every imaginable shade, class, grade, and condition (though all having one common standing) so on the new, the divine, the heavenly platform, you may meet with every possible variety of practical condition: the greatest possible difference in intelligence, experience, and spiritual power, while all possessing the same standing before God, all being in Christ. There can be no degrees as to standing, whatever there may be as to state. The convert of yesterday, and the hoary-headed father in Christ are both alike as to standing. Each is a man in Christ, and there can be no advance upon this. We sometimes hear of, “The higher Christian life”; but, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a higher or a lower Christian life, inasmuch as Christ is the life of every believer. It may be that those who use the term mean a right thing. They probably refer to the higher stages of the Christian life – greater nearness to God, greater likeness to Christ, greater power in the Spirit, more devotedness, more separation from the world, more entire consecration of heart to Christ. But all these things belong to the question of our state, not to our standing. This latter is absolute, settled, unchangeable. It is in Christ – nothing less, nothing more, nothing different. If we are not in Christ, we are in our sins; but if we are in Christ, we cannot possibly be higher, as to standing.

If the reader will turn with us, for a few moments, to 1 Cor. 15:45–48, he will find some powerful teaching on

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great foundation truth. The apostle speaks here of two men, "The first and the second." And let it be carefully noted that the Second Man is by no means federally connected with the first, but stands in contrast with him – a new, independent, divine, heavenly source of life in Himself. The first man has been entirely set aside, as a ruined, guilty, outcast creature. We speak of Adam federally, as the head of a race. Personally, Adam was saved by grace; but if we look at him from a federal standpoint, we see him a hopeless wreck.

The first man is an irremediable ruin. This is proved by the fact of a second Man; for truly we may say of the men as of the covenants, "If the first had been found faultless, then should no place have been sought for the Second." But the very fact of a second Man being introduced demonstrates the hopeless ruin of the first. Why a second, if aught could be made of the first? If our old Adam nature was, in any wise, capable of being improved, there was no need of something new. But "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Rom. 8; Gal. 6).

There is immense moral power in all this line of teaching. It sets forth Christianity in vivid and striking contrast with every form of religiousness under the sun. Take Judaism or any other ism that ever was known or that now exists in this world, and what do you find it to be? Is it not invariably something designed for the testing, or experimenting for the improvement, or advancement of the first man? Unquestionably.

But what is Christianity? It is something entirely new – heavenly, spiritual, divine. It is based upon the cross of Christ, in the which the first man came to his end, where sin was put away, judgment borne, the old man crucified and put out of God's sight forever, so far as all believers are concerned. The cross closes, for faith, the history of the first man. "I am crucified with Christ," says the apostle. And again, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts."

Are these mere figures of speech, or do they set forth, in the mighty words of the Holy Spirit, the grand fact of the entire setting aside of the first man, as utterly worthless and condemned? The latter, most assuredly. Christianity starts, as it were, from the open grave of the Second Man, to pursue its bright career onward to eternal glory. It is, emphatically, a new creation in which there is not so much as a single shred of the old thing – for in this "all things are of God." And if "all things" are of God, there can be nothing of man.

What rest! What comfort! What strength! What moral elevation! What sweet relief for the poor burdened soul that has been vainly seeking, for years perhaps, to find peace in self-improvement! What deliverance from the wretched thralldom of legality, in all its phases, to find out the pre-

cious secret that my guilty, ruined bankrupt self – the very thing that I have been trying by every means in my power to improve, has been completely and forever set aside – that God is not looking for any amendment in it – that He has condemned it and put it to death in the cross of His Son! What an answer is here to the monk, the ascetic, and the ritualist! Oh, that it were understood in all its emancipating power! This heavenly, this divine, this spiritual Christianity. Surely were it only known in its living power and reality, it would deliver the soul from the thousand and one forms of corrupt religion whereby the arch-enemy and deceiver is ruining the souls of untold millions. We may truly say that Satan's most successful effort against the truth of the gospel, against the Christianity of the New Testament, is seen in the fact of his leading unconverted people to take and apply to themselves ordinances of the Christian religion, and to profess many of its doctrines. In this way he blinds their eyes to their own true condition, as utterly ruined, guilty, and undone; and strikes a deadly blow at the pure gospel of Christ. The best piece that was ever put upon the "old garment" of man's ruined nature is the profession of Christianity; and, the better the piece, the worse the rent. See Mark 2:21.

Let us bend an attentive ear to the following weighty words of the greatest teacher and best exponent of true Christianity the world ever saw. "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Mark this, "I – not I – but Christ." The old "I" – "crucified." The new "I" – Christ. "And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:19,20).

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. It is not "the old man," the first man, becoming religious, even though the religion be the profession of the doctrines, and the adopting of the ordinances of Christianity. No; it is the death and burial of the old man – the old I – and becoming a new man in Christ. He has passed clean out of the old creation standing – the old estate of sin and death, guilt and condemnation; and he has passed into a new creation standing – a new estate of life and righteousness in a risen and glorified Christ, the Head of the new creation, the last Adam.

Such is the position and unalterable standing of the feeblest believer in Christ. There is absolutely no other standing for any Christian. I must either be in the first man or in the Second. There is no THIRD man, for the Second Man is the last Adam. There is no middle ground. I am either in Christ, or I am in my sins. But if I am in Christ, I am as He is before God. "As He is so are we, in this world." He does not say, "As He was" but "as He is." That is, the Christian is viewed by God as one with Christ – the Second Man, in whom He delights. We do not speak of His deity, of this

course, which is incommunicable. That blessed One stood in the believer's stead – bore his sins, died his death, paid his penalty, represented him in every respect; took all his guilt, all his liabilities, all that pertained to him as a man in nature, stood as his substitute, in all the verity and reality of that word, and having divinely met his case, and borne his judgment, He rose from the dead, and is now the Head, the Representative, and the only true definition of the believer before God.

To this most glorious and enfranchising truth, Scripture bears the simplest testimony. The passage which we have just quoted from Galatians is a most vivid, powerful, and condensed statement of it. And if the reader will turn to Romans 6, he will find further evidence. We shall quote some of the weighty sentences.

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Far be the thought. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized to Jesus Christ were baptized to His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also of resurrection. Knowing this that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:1–11).

Mark especially these words in the foregoing quotation – “WE THAT ARE DEAD” – “We are buried with Him” – “LIKE AS CHRIST was raised .....EVEN SO we also” – “Our old man is crucified with Him” – “Dead with Christ” – “Dead indeed unto sin.” Do we really understand such utterances? Have we entered into their real force and meaning? Do we, in very deed, perceive their application to ourselves? These are searching questions for the heart, and needful. The real doctrine of Romans 6 is but little apprehended. There are thousands who profess to believe in the atoning virtue of the death of Christ, but who do not see aught therein beyond the forgiveness of their sins. They do not see the crucifixion, death, and burial of the old man – the destruction of the body of sin – the condemnation of sin – the entire setting aside of the old system of things belonging to their first Adam condition – in a word their perfect identification with a dead and risen Christ. Hence

it is that we press this grand and all-important line of truth upon the attention of the reader. It lies at the very base of all true Christianity, and forms an integral part of the truth of the gospel.

Let us hearken to further evidence on the point. Hear what the apostle said to the Colossians: “Wherefore, if ye be DEAD WITH CHRIST from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines of men (such as) touch not, taste not, handle not?” – thus it is that human ordinances speak to us, telling us not to touch this, not to taste that, not to handle the other, as if there could possibly be any divine principle involved in such things – “which all are to perish with the using”; and “which have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body – not in any honor – to the satisfying of the flesh. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things that are above, not on things on the earth. FOR YE HAVE DIED and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Col. 2; 3:2)

Here, again, let us inquire how far we enter into the true force, meaning, and application of such words as these – “Why as though living in the world,” etc.? Are we living in the world or living in Heaven – which? The true Christian is one who has died out of this present evil world. He has no more to do with it than Christ. “Like as Christ...even so we.” He is dead to the law – dead to sin; alive in Christ – alive to God – alive in the new creation. He belongs to Heaven. He is enrolled as a citizen of Heaven. His religion, his politics, his morals are all heavenly. He is a heavenly man walking on the earth, and fulfilling all the duties which belong to the varied relationships in which the hand of God has placed him, and in which the Word of God most fully recognizes him, and amply guides him, such as husband, father, master, child servant, and such like. The Christian is not a monk, an ascetic, or a hermit. He is, we repeat, a heavenly, spiritual man, in the world, but not of it. He is like a foreigner, so far as his residence here is concerned. He is in the body, as to the fact of his condition; but not in the flesh as to the principle of his standing. He is a man in Christ.

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Ere closing this article, we should like to call the reader's attention to 2 Cor. 12. In it he will find, at once, the positive standing and the possible state of the believer. The standing is fixed and unalterable, as set forth in that one comprehensive sentence – "A man in Christ." The state may graduate between the two extremes presented in the opening and closing verses of this chapter. A Christian may be in the third heaven, amid the seraphic visions of that blessed and holy place; or he may, if not watchful, sink down into all the gross and evil things named in verses 20–21.

It may be asked, "Is it possible that a true child of God could ever be found in such a low moral condition?" Alas! it is indeed possible. There is no depth of sin and folly into which a Christian is not capable of plunging, if not kept by the grace of God. Even the blessed apostle himself, when he came down from the third heaven, needed "a thorn in the flesh" to keep him from being "exalted above measure." We might suppose that a man who had been up in that bright and blessed region could never again feel the stirrings of pride. But the plain fact is that even the third heavens cannot cure the flesh. It is utterly incorrigible and must be judged and kept under, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, else it will cut out plenty of sorrowful work for us.

Still, the believer's standing is in Christ, forever justified, accepted, perfect in Him. And, moreover, he must ever judge his state by his standing, never his standing by his state. To attempt to reach the standing by my state is legalism; to refuse to judge my state by the standing is antinomianism. Both – though so diverse one from the other – are alike false, alike opposed to the truth of God, alike offensive to the Holy Spirit, alike removed from the divine idea of "a man in Christ." *To be continued next month.*

## **I Know The Shepherd**

There was once a Shakespearean actor who was known everywhere for his one-man shows of readings and recitations from the classics. He would always end his performance with a dramatic reading of Psalm 23.

Each night, without exception, as the actor began his recitation – "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want?" the crowd would listen attentively. And then, at the conclusion of the Psalm, they would rise in thunderous applause in appreciation of the actor's incredible ability to bring the verse to life.

But one night, just before the actor was to offer his customary recital of Psalm 23, a young man from the audience spoke up. "Sir, do you mind if tonight I recite Psalm 23?" The actor was quite taken back by this unusual request, but he allowed the young man to come forward and stand front and center on the stage to recite the Psalm, knowing that the ability of this unskilled youth would be no match for his own talent.

With a soft voice, the young man began to recite the words of the Psalm. When he was finished, there was no applause. There was no standing ovation as on other nights. All that could be heard was the sound of weeping. The audience had been so moved by the young man's recitation that every eye was full of tears. Amazed by what he had heard, the actor said to the youth, "I don't understand. I have been performing Psalm 23 for years. I have a lifetime of experience and training – but I have never been able to move an audience as you have tonight. Tell me, what is your secret?"

The young man quietly replied, "Well sir, you know the Psalm...I know the Shepherd." \* Author Unknown