

# Milk & Honey

Vol. XXX June 2016 No. 6

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

## Are You Happy?

H. Mackintosh

God's thought at creation was that man should be happy. Not only was he upright, but he was made in the image of God. With the rest of creation, he was pronounced to be "very good."

He was distinguished, however, from other creatures in a way most remarkable, for "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Thus He, who only has immortality, gave to man an immortal soul. Besides all this, God blessed him. Male and female created He them, and God blessed them, and set them in dominion over other creatures. Man in the beginning was happy and honored. He was set by his Creator in the position of superiority and enjoyment.

But man soon sinned, and then death came, and judgment too, for God "drove out the man." Then man, when driven out, only proved himself to be evil and that continually, after God's repeated interference in judgment. Instead of turning toward God with repentance, he made gods of his own, and honored and served the creature more than the Creator.

In this state of things God called out one man, Abram, for Himself saying, "I will bless thee," and when he believed, God counted his faith for righteousness. He promised him that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Thus we see that God's mind was that man who had to do with Him should be happy.

In process of time, Abram's seed, the children of Israel, were brought out of Egypt in virtue of the blood of the Lamb, and by the mighty power of God. Thus delivered from misery and bondage, although a people in the flesh, they were brought into a relationship of nearness to Jehovah. Again, God showed that it was His mind that man should be happy, for not only did He bless them in a marvelous way, but again and again called upon them to rejoice. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto." (See Deut. 12:7,12,18; Lev. 23:40.)

And so now, in a higher and an eternal sense, it is clearly the Lord's mind that those who are His children should be happy. Not only has He given us remission of sins and created us in Christ Jesus, but He has shed abroad His love in our

hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, and "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 1:3,7.) Being thus brought into nearness and relationship to God, and having the Holy Spirit in us, we are brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Thus our minds, in our measure, can run in the current of God's thoughts and our hearts can dwell in the circle of His love.

The Lord Himself now becomes the proper object of our affections, and the source of all our blessings. Our eternal life and prospects are all bound up with Him. His personal glory, His infinite worth, His excellence and perfection, His accomplished work on the cross with the various official glories He sustains, and His coming again now engage and cheer our souls. We are therefore enjoined to "rejoice evermore," to "rejoice in the Lord always," yea, to "joy [or boast] in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the [reconciliation]."

Our Lord instructs us as to the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. When the shepherd found his lost sheep, he took it home upon his shoulders, rejoicing, and called his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. The father rejoiced because he had received his lost son, safe and sound. Thus we are informed that the Father and the Son in heaven rejoice when a sinner is really brought to God. After this, our Lord so instructed His own disciples who were clean through the word which He had spoken to them that He added, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11.

We clearly see from this that it is the Lord's mind that believers should be happy. Early Christians knew well the precious reality of it. Jesus, after His resurrection, presented Himself in the midst of His sorrowing disciples who were shut in for fear of the Jews, and showed them His hands and His side saying, "Peace be unto you." Next we are told, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." At the close of Luke's gospel, when Jesus was parted from them and carried up into heaven, He left them so happy that "they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." Happy people because wholly taken up with their crucified and ascended Saviour!

Again at Pentecost we find believers in such a happy state that we read they "did eat their meat with gladness

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ness of heart praising God.” After this, in a solitary corner of the earth, no sooner was the Ethiopian eunuch brought to a true knowledge of his eternal salvation by Christ alone than he went on his way rejoicing. The Philippian jailor rejoiced too, when only a little before amid the distressing circumstances of his position, he would have rashly put an end to his existence. This man cast himself on Christ alone for salvation according to the word of His faithful servants, and rejoiced, believing God with all his house.

Elsewhere we are taught in the Word of God that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” We certainly do well to lay this scripture solemnly to heart, for we read of disciples in a former time who were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14:17; Acts 13:52.)

Paul prayed that saints might be filled with all joy and peace in believing. John says in his first epistle, “These things write we unto you, that your joy might be full. “Peter speaks of others whose joy in the Lord was so abundant that they “rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” How sweet and comforting it is to know that it is the will of God that believers should even now be unspeakably happy!

Perhaps some one will say, “You would not speak so confidently of the Christian’s happiness if you knew what I have to contend with in myself.” But who ever heard of self being the source of true happiness? On the contrary, “In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Besides, are we not assured by the unerring word of the living God that our old man is crucified with Christ?

So we are enjoined to “reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin,” which means not to reckon ourselves to be living, but dead, done with at the cross. There we are seen in Christ our Substitute under the judgment of God, dead upon the cross. Thus are we freed, judicially freed from our old man – our Adam standing — and are enjoined to think of ourselves as alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Happy are those who reckon as God would have them, and always know they are seen by God as in Christ Jesus in heavenly places! Such only have done with self.

But others may be ready to say, “If my circumstances were altered, I should indeed be happy.” Or they might say, “If I were only delivered from this pressing trial, I should then rejoice.” But this is not so. If your present joy is dependent on your circumstances, it is precisely what much of the worldling’s joy consists of, and needs neither grace nor faith. That we should look carefully into all our matters in order that we may honor God in them, is true enough, but circumstances, however prosperous, should never be the spring of a Christian’s joy, however much they may be the occasion of present thanksgiving to God.

On the contrary, it is often in the deepest waters of affliction that the Christian knows the greatest joy in the Lord. It was so with the saints in 1 Peter 1:8. They were in great trial and heaviness: houseless, homeless, in a foreign region, with all the sufferings connected with a persecuted and scattered but harmless people. But how full of joy they were! Is there anything in Scripture that exceeds it? And so it was with Paul and Silas. Was it not when their backs were smarting from the lacerating scourge and their feet made fast in the dungeon’s stocks that they were so truly happy that they sang praises to God? Let us lay these things to heart, and ask ourselves why we are not more characterized as a happy, praising people.

There are three points of instruction on this subject brought before us in the verse already quoted. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 Peter 1:8. We have here, first, the spring of the Christian’s happiness, secondly, the secret of its realization, and thirdly, its measure.

1. The spring of our happiness is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself – “in whom, though now ye see Him not...ye rejoice.” It is the man Christ Jesus in the glory whom we now see by faith. All our resources are in Him and it is vain to look elsewhere, for all other streams are dry. He is the Rock which was smitten, and we have only now to speak to the Rock, and He will give forth His waters. He only is the fountain of life. He is before the face of God in glory for us and we are complete in Him, in whom all fulness dwells, who is the Head of all principality and power. Let it then be a settled fact with our souls that Christ Himself, not friends, nor self, nor circumstances, but He Himself is the only source of our happiness.

Earthly friends may fail or leave us,  
One day soothe, the next day grieve us,  
But this Friend will ne’er deceive us,  
O how He loves!

2. It is by the activity of faith in Him that we have present happiness. A person may be a true believer and yet not be exercising faith in Him, not having his thoughts and heart running in the channel of divine truth concerning Him. It is the soul’s having to do with Him now, whom we have not seen, but who is revealed in the Word, that we have present joy, not thinking of Him according to our poor thoughts, but as God has revealed Him to us in His Word. Hence we read, “In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice.” Let us not expect to be happy if we are brooding over our bodies, feelings, circumstances – or attainments. Occupation with Him alone enables us to rise above these things. We can exultingly sing:

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Oh for ten thousand tongues to praise  
My Saviour, and my God!

3. As to the measure of our joy, our Lord said, "That your joy might be full." John, as we have noticed, so writes that our "joy might be full," and here it is recorded of Christians of olden times, that they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." To dwell on the infinite fulness and perfections of the person, work, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ is to dive into a boundless ocean of divine love. Then our thoughts are launched, as it were, into glory. We enter upon the boundlessness of the eternal and unchanging love and glory of God. The rich, free, and unmerited love of God has "called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus"! Though now by faith we rejoice in Him, the next moment our Lord may come and take us there. Then faith will be changed to sight, for we shall see His face, be with Him, and be like Him forever.

Watching and ready may we be,  
As those who long their Lord to see. \*

## Modesty

Steve Hulshizer

*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; 1Tim. 2:9*

One does not need to go out of his or her way to notice that modesty has basically gone by the way side in the world. This is also true in much of Christendom as well. Sadly, it is often missing in the believing Body of Christ.

"What is modest?" is the normal response. The question is followed by examples of different cultures seeing it differently. The word used for modesty would give the sense of "proper, or respectable." It comes from a word meaning "order." It happens to be the Greek word, *kosmos*, often use as "world." It speaks of the orderly arrangement of the world and the expanse around it. So we know one thought of modesty is orderliness. A disheveled man or women certainly does not portray this aspect of modesty.

From the Scripture text above we can easily see that the Holy Spirit through Paul is saying that women should dress "thoughtfully (sobriety), and not "over dress" (broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array).

So to dress modesty is dressing in way that does not make the individual a "show stopper, head turner, or the center of attention." Wearing clothes that reveal or outline the body can certainly produce all of these. Sisters, and brothers, need to go before the mirror, and the Lord, and think soberly as to whether they are over, or under, dressed. Brothers you too need to think whether your dress is disorderly and attention getting as well. May we with submissive hearts consider the matter before the Lord. \*

## The Demas Way

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.*

2 Timothy 4:10

The world is opposed to Christians, and it shows its opposition by means of hatred. "Yea," says Paul to Timothy, "and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). But the world has another way of showing its opposition. That is what I would call the Demas way: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." The world does not care very much how it attacks Christ's followers. If by throwing them into prison it can wrest them from Christ, it will do so; but if that does not work, it will try some other method.

"Demas hath forsaken me"—the love of ease, love of the things of the world, its wealth, its position, its so-called pomp and show, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. How many good men have been ruined by that! Prosperity can be very dangerous to the soul, and the world is prepared to use that. If direct opposition will not work, it will pamper us, it will dangle these things before us and thus try to wean us from Christ. So it is not surprising that He asked the Father to keep us in His name.

Another way in which the world does the same thing is by what may be described as the Barnabas method. We are told in Acts 15 that a dispute had taken place between Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas wanted to take his relative John Mark on their second missionary journey, but Paul said that he would not have him. Paul felt that John Mark had let them down and deserted them when they had taken him on their previous journey and that he was not therefore the man to accompany them. Here we have worldly relationships, such as family relationships, interfering in God's work. It is the tendency not to judge things in a spiritual way. \*

From *Safe in the World*, Martyn Lloyd-Jones- *Walking with God*

## Taking A Stand

Steve Hulshizer

Moses did it. Joshua, Gideon, Daniel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul, and many others down through the ages have done it. They all have stood up in times of crisis and in times of departure. They warned the people of God. They shed tears over them. They also took a stand for the truth of the Word of God. (Acts 20:31-32)

Now taking a stand is more than casting traditions in concrete, and refusing to make any changes in the way the assembly functions. It is a conviction that the Word of God is the sole and final authority in the life of the individual

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A non-profit ministry of  
Spread The Word, Inc., 2400 Admire Springs Dr.  
Dover, PA 17315



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**June 2016**

## **How Do You Hear?** - Bill MacDonald

“Therefore take heed how you hear.” Luke 8:18 In the Christian life it is a question not only of what we hear but also of how we hear. It is possible to hear the Word of God with an attitude of indifference. We can read the Bible as we would read any other book, seemingly unconcerned that the Almighty God is speaking to us in it. We can hear with a critical attitude. Here we put human intellect above the Scriptures. We sit in judgment on the Bible instead of letting the Bible judge us. We can hear with a rebellious attitude. When we come to portions that deal with the stern demands of discipleship or with women’s subjection and headcovering, we become enraged and utterly refuse to obey. We can be forgetful hearers, like the man in the Book of James “who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was” (1:23-24, NASB). Perhaps the most common class is the callous hearers. These people have heard the Word so much that they have become insensitive. They listen to a sermon mechanically. It has become a ho-hum routine. Their ears are jaded. Their attitude is, “What can you tell me that I haven’t already heard?” The more we hear the Word of God without obeying what we hear, the more we become judicially deafened. If we refuse to hear, we lose the capacity to hear. The best way to hear is to hear reverently, obediently, and seriously. We should approach the Bible with the determination to do what it says, even if no one else is doing it. The wise man is the one who not only hears but does. God is looking for men who tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2). Paul commended the Thesalonians because when they heard the Word of God, they did not receive it “as the word of men, but as it is in truth” (1 Thess. 2:13). In the same manner, we should be careful *how we hear.* \* From *One Day at a Time*

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and in the assembly. It is the conviction that “obedience is better than sacrifice,” that truth comes before pragmatism and popularity. It is a conviction that goes beyond family ties and the approval of men. It is conviction that is firm, but gracious—not cold and legalistic. It is living and functioning by faith in the Word of God, regardless of what others may think and do. A willingness to stand alone if need be. \*

## **Spread The Word Family Bible Conference**

**July 23 - 30 Greenwood Hills**

**Scheduled speakers**

Gary McBride, Keith Keyser, Bob Upton

**Register at [GreenwoodHills.net](http://GreenwoodHills.net)**

## **Shepherding Conference**

**September 22-24**

Greenwood Hills Bible Conference

**Register at [GreenwoodHills.net](http://GreenwoodHills.net)**

## **Milk & Honey Information**

There is no charge for Milk & Honey. It, like all ministries of Spread The Word, is supported entirely by the freewill offerings of the Lord’s people. All gifts are tax deductible.

Publisher: **Spread The Word, Inc.**

2400 Admire Springs Dr.

Dover, PA 17315

Editor: Stephen Hulshizer

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Web/Contact [www.STW1982.com](http://www.STW1982.com)

Circulation 6,000/month