

Milk & Honey

Vol. XXXI April 2017 No. 4

Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

“ACCEPTED” AND “ACCEPTABLE”

C.H. Mackintosh

“He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).
“Wherefore we labor, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him” (2 Cor. 5:9).

The two words which form the heading of this paper, though rendered by the same word in our Authorized Version, are not at all the same. The former has respect to the person of the believer, the later to his practical ways. The first refers to his standing, the second to his state. It is one thing to be accepted; it is quite another to be acceptable. The former is the fruit of God’s free grace to us as sinners; the latter is the fruit of our earnest labor as saints, though most surely, it is only by grace we can do anything.

It is well that the Christian reader should thoroughly understand the distinction between these two things. It will preserve him effectively from legality on the one hand, and laxity on the other. It remains unalterably true of all believers, that God has made them accepted in the Beloved. Nothing can ever touch this. The very feeblest lamb in all the flock stands accepted in a risen Christ. There is no difference. The grace of God has placed them all on this high and blessed ground. We do not labor to be accepted. It is all the fruit of God’s free grace. He found us all dead in trespasses and sins. We were morally dead, far off from God, hopeless, Godless, Christless, children of wrath, whether Jews or Gentiles. But Christ died for us, and God has co-quickened, co-raised and co-seated us in Christ, and made us accepted in Him.

This is the inalienable, eternal standing of all without exception, who believe in the name of the Son of God. Christ in His infinite grace placed Himself judicially where we were morally, and having put away our sins and perfectly satisfied on our behalf the claims of divine righteousness, God entered the scene and raised Him from the dead, and with Him all His members as seen in His own eternal purpose, and to be called in due time and brought into the actual possession and enjoyment of the marvelous place of blessing and privilege, by the effective operation of the Holy Spirit.

Well may we take up the opening words of the Epistle to the Ephesians and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” All praise to His name throughout the everlasting ages!

All believers, then, are accepted — perfectly and forever accepted — in the Beloved. God sees them in Christ and as Christ. He thinks of them as He thinks of Him; loves them as He loves Him. They are ever before Him in perfect acceptance in the blessed Son of His love, nor can anything or anyone ever interfere with this their high and glorious position which rests on the eternal stability of the grace of God, the accomplished work of His Son, and attested by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

But are all believers acceptable in their practical ways? Are all so conducting themselves that their dealings and doings will bear the light of the judgment-seat of Christ? Are all laboring to be agreeable to Him?

Christian reader, these are serious questions. Let us solemnly weigh them. Let us not turn away from the sharp edge of plain practical truth. The blessed apostle knew he was accepted. Did that make him lax, careless or indolent? Far from it. “We labor,” he says, “to be acceptable to Him.” The sweet assurance that we are accepted in Him is the ground of our labor to be acceptable to Him. “The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead. And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

All this is preeminently practical. We are called upon, by every argument which can bear sway over the heart and conscience, to labor diligently to be acceptable to our blessed and adorable Lord. Is there anything of legality in this? Not the slightest tinge. The very reverse. It is the holy superstructure of a devoted life, erected on the solid foundation of our eternal election and perfect acceptance

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Reasoning with God

Isaiah 1 (part 2)
Warren Henderson

The only solution to the spiritual travesty that Isaiah described in the previous verses is wholesale and heartfelt repentance. Israel needed to abandon the old life and adopt new patterns of thinking which will prompt godly conduct (1:16-17). God's people must be washed through repentance, and then cease from evil, seek justice, do what was good and proper, and assist those in need. One cannot pursue righteousness without first choosing to be cleansed of corruption. James affirms that this is also the solution to spiritual lethargy in the Church Age:

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:25-27).

Christianity is not a religion, but Christian doctrine lived out produces the right kind of religion that pleases God. When one comes into a right relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, then, and only then, is he or she able to please God by doing sincere and God-enabled deeds. World religion is an exhaustive system of *doings* apart from God's truth and God's enablement. The doing of good things does not define what true Christianity is, but Spirit-filled Christians do prove that Christianity is real. God is not impressed by religious ritual, developed church tradition, sanctimonious form, and denominational smugness, but rather with personal living that conforms to divine truth (Col. 2:20-23).

After confronting Israel about their vain religiosity and telling them what they needed to do to please God, He then informs them how to do it – truly seek the Lord and receive cleansing and forgiveness:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword”; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken (vv. 18-20).

The scene pictures a courtroom where two parties present their arguments in a particular case. Israel does not speak, but the Lord does: *“Come now, and let us reason together”* (1:18). This statement cannot be separated from the previous rebuke: *“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease*

to do evil, learn to do good” (1:16-17). Willful obedience verifies that the Word of God was effectual in changing the heart and conscience. This means that the hearer received and acted upon Scripture in genuine faith.

God's grace is not contingent on doing good deeds or self-advancement in righteousness, rather His promises of blessings are received to those who trust and obey His Word. Divine blessing follows our repentance and cleansing. This is the type of reasoning which ultimately leads to receiving God's gift of salvation. Approaching God anyone other way than through faith in His Word leaves the debt of sin (Rom. 4:3-4).

Scripture repeatedly offers man an opportunity to search out and commune with God if man will yield to what God wants him to understand: *“You will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart”* (Jer. 29:13). *“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God”* (1 Chron. 22:19). *“The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth”* (Ps. 145:18). God is reasonable, and He invites man to explore truth with Him. King Solomon wisely instructed, *“Consider the work of God”* (Eccl. 7:13). Man is to ponder God's nature, character, Word, and works, but not without including Him in the exercise, or else humanly derived conclusions will be lacking. We must reason together with God. Why? Because without God's help man cannot understand or reason out what God has purposely concealed: *“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children”* (Deut. 29:29). Because God alone holds absolute truth, He will always transcend human reasoning and religion.

This divine reasoning and admonition spans all dispensations of God's working with humanity – those who humble themselves before the Lord and come to Him on His terms will be forgiven. “Willing” and “obedient” (1:19) and “refuse” and “rebel” (1:20) are paired-words relating to the human will and its choices. God is always ready to extend grace and forgiveness to those who will agree with Him on the matter of sin and act in faith to stand with Him against themselves.

Whether the Jews, the Church, or the lost, God is calling and pleading with individuals to trust Him, but He does not force anyone heavenward against his or her will. Because reason and free choice are required to approach God, man is required to weigh out the evidence, wrangle over the possibilities, consider God's Word, and come to a logical conclusion which will cause him to act in good faith. God assists a true seeker every step of the way. Reasoning without God leads us nowhere (Prov. 1:7, 9:10)! Unfortunately, Israel rejected the messages of God's prophets, the nation

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would not reason together with the Lord. May the Church learn from their mistake: right morality and spirituality which heed the truth are far more important to God than ceremonial exactness, religious form, and social correctness!

“I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost; Christianity without Christ; forgiveness without repentance; salvation without regeneration; politics without God; and Heaven without Hell.” — William Booth *

Continued from Page 1 - Accepted and Acceptable

in a risen and glorified Christ at God’s right hand. How could there be the very smallest atom of legality here? Utterly impossible! It is all the pure fruit of God’s free and sovereign grace from first to last.

But ought we not, beloved Christian reader, to arouse ourselves to attend to the claims of Christ as to practical righteousness? Should we not zealously and lovingly aim at giving Him pleasure? Are we to content ourselves with simply talking about our acceptance in Christ, while at the same time having no real earnest care as to the acceptability of our ways? God forbid! Yes, let us so dwell upon the rich grace that shines in the acceptance of our persons, that we may be led out in diligent and fervent effort to be found acceptable in our ways.

It is greatly to be feared that there is an appalling amount of unhallowed traffic in the doctrines of grace without any godly care as to the application of those doctrines to our practical conduct. How all this is to end, it would be hard to say, but most assuredly, there is an urgent call upon all who profess to be accepted in Christ to labor fervently to be acceptable to Him. *

Judging

C.H. Mackintosh

That the application of Matthew 7:1 to what you refer is incorrect will be evident to you if you refer to verse 15 of this chapter. How can we “beware of false prophets” if we are not to judge at all? We must not judge motives, but we are bound to judge conduct and doctrine. Look at 1 Corinthians 5:12-13. What does this mean? Clearly, that Christians are called upon to judge evil conduct and put away the impenitent offender. If the Corinthians had not done so, God would have judged them. Again, look at 1 John 4:1. What does this mean? Clearly, that Christians are called upon to judge the doctrine of any coming to them and to reject the false. *

Shepherding Conference

Mark your calendar — September 21 - 23

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very weakness is an element of strength. Our weakness is an empty cup – which God fills with His own strength.

You may think that your weakness unfits you for noble, strong, beautiful living – or for sweet, gentle, helpful serving. You wish you could get clear of it. It seems to burden you – an ugly spiritual deformity. But really it is something which He will transform into a blessing, a source of His power.

“He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds” (Psalm 147:3). *

“Gain To Me”

C.H. Mackintosh

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phil. 3:7). What a marvelous change! Saul had many sources of gain. He had gathered many honors around his name. He had made progress in Judaism beyond many of his equals. He had achieved a legal righteousness in which no man could find a flaw. His zeal, his knowledge and his morality were of the very highest order. But from the moment Christ was revealed to him, there was a thorough revolution. Everything was changed. His righteousness, his learning, his morality, all that could in any wise be gain to Paul, became as dung. He does not speak of open sins, but of those things that could justly be esteemed as gain to him. The revelation of the glory of Christ had so completely changed the entire current of Paul’s thoughts, that the very things which he had once esteemed as positive gain, he now regarded as positive loss.

Why? Simply because he had found his all in Christ. That blessed One had supplanted everything in Paul’s heart. All that belonged to Paul was displaced by Christ. Hence it would have involved actual loss to possess any righteousness or wisdom, holiness or morality of his own, seeing that he had found all these in divine perfectness in Christ.

If Christ is made of God unto me righteousness, is it not a loss to me to have any righteousness of my own? Surely. If I have gotten that which is divine, have I any need of that which is human? Clearly not. The more completely I am stripped and emptied of everything in which “I” could glory or which would be gain to “me,” the better, inasmuch as it only renders me all the more entitled to a full and all-sufficient Christ. Whatever it be that tends to exalt self, whether it be religiousness, morality, respectability, wealth, glory, personal beauty, intelligence or philanthropy, it is a positive hindrance to our enjoyment of Christ as both the foundation of the conscience and as the object of the heart. May the Spirit of God make Christ more precious to us! *

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A non-profit ministry of
Spread The Word, Inc., 3237 Faire Wynd Pl
Dover, PA 17315



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April 2017

STW Spring Conference April 8, 2017

North York Gospel Chapel
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York, PA 17404

Bob Upton (MN), Bruce Hulshizer (PA)

10AM - 3:15PM
Lunch served*

* It helps to know how many are coming. You can contact us via our web site FoodForSaints.com.

Free Booklet Self-Surrender

A 14 page booklet by C.H. Mackintosh focuses on the 2nd chapter of Philippians and the example of Christ's selflessness. Important truth for all saints. Write for a free copy.

York Bible Study Program

May 13 2 Peter Mark Kolchin
10 AM - 3PM, Lunch served.

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.**
3237 Faire Wynd Pl, Dover, PA 17315
Editor: Stephen Hulshizer
Fax/Phone (717) 467-5729 phone
Web/Contact www.FoodForSaints.com
Circulation 5,600 mailed/month

The God of the Brokenhearted

J. R. Miller

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart..." (Psalm 34:18).

The God of the Bible, is the God of the brokenhearted. The world cares little for broken hearts. Indeed, people oftentimes break hearts by their cruelty, their falseness, their injustice, their coldness – and then move on as heedlessly as if they had trodden only on a worm! But God cares.

Physicians in their rounds, do not stop at the homes of the well – but of the sick. So it is with God in His movements through this world. It is not to the whole and the well – but to the wounded and stricken, that He comes with sweetest tenderness! Jesus said of His mission:

"He has sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted" (Isaiah 61:1).

We look upon trouble as misfortune. We say that the life is being destroyed, which is passing through adversity. But the truth which we find in the Bible, does not so represent suffering. God is a Repairer and Restorer of the hurt and ruined life. He takes the bruised reed – and by His gentle skill makes it whole again, until it grows into fairest beauty. The love and grace of God, minister sweet blessing of comfort and healing - to restore the broken and wounded hearts.

God is the God of those who fail. There is a special divine promise, which says,

"My strength is made perfect in weakness."

When we are conscious of our own insufficiency, then we are ready to receive of the Divine sufficiency. Thus our

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