

# **BIBLE MEDITATION by Denis G Clark**

## **WHAT IS MEDITATION?**

The word meditation comes from the same word from which we derive the word mastication, or, at a lower level, chewing the cud. It implies careful, unrushed, prayerful and serious thought. But something far greater is also expected from meditation, and that is that there is some outer communication with Someone greater than ourselves, invading our thinking. As far as the christian is concerned, that Someone must be the Holy Spirit, and care should be taken not to be deceived.

### **True and false meditation**

With other forms of meditation, those engaging in it are urged to let their minds become a blank so that these outer impressions may be received. Deceiving spirits wait for just this opportunity, and at the beginning come as "angels of light" with good and kind thoughts. They persist until the person meditating feels that they can trust their "voice" communicating with them, and soon after the deception begins. Christian must have nothing to do with this avenue of meditation.

The apostle Paul instructed us, *"Fill your minds with those things that are good and deserve praise, things that are true, noble, right, pure lovely and honourable. Put into practice what you learned and received from me"*, and he said that in Philippians 4:8-9. Where better to find these things than in the Scriptures. They are to be received in the inner being and the route is, of course, through the mind. The mind should not become a container, storing up mere knowledge of these things, but a filter, trying and testing all thoughts against the Word of Truth, and then letting them go down into our heart, or inner being. Once there, knowledge turns into truth, and if allowed to thoroughly occupy our subconscious becomes our very life. Once the Word takes over our behaviour, it becomes Christ in us, the living word, the hope of glory.

### **The work of meditation illustrated**

Let me illustrate. I have, we shall say, an enemy. My feelings against that person respond accordingly, and in given circumstances my emotions will express just what I feel about that enemy. But if one day I read in Luke 6:27, *"But I tell you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you"*. There is an immediate reaction within me. Either I can keep those words as mere knowledge, knowing that this is what is expected of a christian yet reject any further penetration of its command. That will develop hypocrisy in me. Or I can give it serious thought, and as I allow what I now know to sink into my heart, or spirit or inner man, I am convicted of my sin. The work of meditation is not complete until my attitude to my enemy is changed.

As I ponder the words, my mind may argue fiercely in my defence, and so a battle begins to rage. But as I continue to allow those words of Jesus to penetrate my inner being, the Holy Spirit may bring to my memory other Scriptures in support. I struggle on until, at last, I am able to bring my wicked heart, for that is where such an issue has to be fought and won - not in the mind, down to the Cross, where I seek forgiveness, cleansing and a new attitude - Christ's attitude - to my enemy. And when that happens, the Holy Spirit may put into my mind some loving action I could perform to my enemy which will change the whole matter, and make my enemy my friend.

### **Meditation is for feeding not knowledge**

Please note that one of the essential things about Bible meditation is not that I might secure a greater knowledge of the Bible, but come to **feed** on the truth contained in it, so that it becomes my very life. Actually this is what salvation is and how it evidences itself in one form. Listen to 1 John 2:17, *"The world and everything in it that men desire is passing away, but he who does what God wants lives for ever"*. Add to this Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21 *"Not every person who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do"*. That is both strong and clear, isn't it.

### **Bishop Joseph Hall's valuation of meditation**

Listen to some very weighty words about meditation which were written by Bishop Joseph Hall. He says, *"It is by meditation that we ransack our deep and false hearts, find out our secret enemies, come to grips with them, expel them, and arm ourselves against their re-entrance. By meditation, we make use of all good means, fit ourselves for all good duties. By meditation, we see our weaknesses, obtain redress, prevent temptations, cheer up our loneliness, temper our occasions of delight, get more light unto our knowledge, add more heat to our affections, put more life into our devotions. It is only by meditation that we are able to be strangers upon the earth as we are commanded to be, and by this we are brought to a right estimation of all earthly things. Finally, into a sweet enjoyment of invisible comforts. Meditation alone is the remedy for security in worldliness, it is the best way to improve christianity. Learn it if you can, neglect it if you so desire, but he who does so shall never find joy, neither in God, nor in himself."*

### **Precautions for safe meditation**

How is christian to approach meditation then with, or even without, the Bible, so that there is a place of safety from Satanic deception? I suggest that you consider and put into practice these precautions:

1. First of all make sure that your heart is cleansed. If there is unconfessed sin, confess and forsake it immediately in all humility.
2. Call upon God the Father to reveal His truth to you, asking Him for the supply of the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit.
3. Submit all the thoughts you receive to the final referee of Truth, the Scriptures. We should always be willing to let God put His blue pencil through anything we might have previously believed. Any thought which conflicts with the Word should be rejected, or seen to be Truth if prejudice has hindered us hitherto. This means,
4. our obedience to the Truth must be greater than our fear of man. This is crucial. Many have strayed because they feared the opinion of others. This does not mean that we should become proud. When Paul received direct revelations, he was careful to check them with the apostles at Jerusalem to make sure that he had not been deceived.
5. Look for the sign which always accompanies Truth. *"You shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall **make** you free"*. Ponder that phrase "**make** you free", for it is important. Truth does not need new circumstances to give you freedom. It needs to change you, so that whatever circumstances have

imprisoned you, they can do it no longer.

We have an epic example of this in Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi.

The circumstances were rough, terrible, but such a change was effected in both of them by midnight that they began to sing and praise God. They were free without any change of circumstances. How did it happen? Doubtless Paul and Silas had been meditating on their sufferings, then began to see how this fitted into the purpose for their lives, namely sharing Christ's reproach and sufferings. This liberated them and they began to sing. It is noteworthy that God shook the circumstances by a mighty earthquake, and this was followed by all the prisoners being made free, not "set free" for none ran away, and climaxed in the salvation of the prison keeper. Knowledge could never accomplish all this, but Truth did, for Jesus is Truth, and He is the great deliverer.

### **Meditation is like "chewing the cud"**

I said earlier that meditation was like chewing the cud. A friend of mine was parked in his car waiting for his wife one day. He was at a corner and part of that corner embraced a farmer's field. Not far from him stood a cow, chewing the cud, slowly and relaxed. While He was waiting and watching, he remembered what he had studied at school about chewing the cud, and how different it is to the human way of chewing. He decided to time what operations he could recognise. He waited until it was obvious that she swallowed what she was chewing. He noted that from the moment of swallowing to receiving it back in her mouth again took exactly five seconds. Then she chewed it again for exactly 55 seconds. The round trip took another five seconds, and she chewed it again for a further 55 seconds. I do not know if this is standard timing for all cattle, but one thing we do know, the process of digestion does not continue until what is being chewed is sufficiently digested to move on.

Meditation is like that. We take a verse, for example, and read it carefully, once, twice, three times. We try to take it into our inner being but it won't go. So we read it again and again, and pray over the little bit of light and truth that we begin to see in it. It still doesn't get through. We read it again, ponder it carefully, unrushed, praying for illumination from the Spirit, until finally the Truth comes through and we are able to receive it in such a way that it changes our lives. And if after some time, the verse yields nothing, do not be discouraged but pass on to the next verse. It may not be until two or three verses later that the Holy Spirit can open that first verse to us. Sometimes it is not until the next day that it opens. This obviously means that the more we know the Word, the more fully each verse we meditate upon is going to yield. Some want to run before they can walk. Some want to be managers before they know how to be an errand boy. Much time and patience is needed.

### **Meditation is like gleaning corn**

It may be likened to the processes Ruth had to go through when she went to pick up corn in Boaz's field. You can read the full story in Ruth chapter 2, but note these headlines, and later you can conduct a most profitable meditation yourself in that chapter, for there is very much more corn for you to pick up than will now be detailed. Notice three things:

1. As a poor widow, she took up her humble position, and slowly followed the reapers down the grooves, picking up one corn of wheat at a time. This way it

takes time to gather a reasonable portion, but there is no other way to start. Those who refuse to start here, just do not start.

2. Later, seeing her prowess, Boaz ordered his young men to drop a handful for her at specified intervals. Imagine her delight every time she came across this extra supply. And the Holy Spirit knows how to do this for you.
3. Ruth was invited to join the workers at Boaz's table, where he, with his own hand, reached to her the parched, or best, corn.

### **The youngest believer may receive divine revelation**

Let me share my own experience with you. I began by reading through the Bible as a young believer, because I did not know what else to do - nobody told me what to do. When I had finished it, gleaning little bits of truth *en route*, I did not know what to do then, so I committed my way to God and began again at Genesis. As soon as I began to read that first chapter, God gave me my first handful. It took me a month to pick it all up. As it spoke about the earth being without form and void, I suddenly saw myself. That was exactly what I was like until the Spirit "*moved upon*" - to use Genesis words - "*the face of the deep*". I became excited. The first thing that God said then was, "*Let there be light*", and that is exactly what happened to me when I came to Christ, for I well remembered how that light shone into my heart, the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And the light was good - not all it showed was good - but the light was good. Then I began to see how that whole chapter gave the clues for the christian life, step by step. But my knowledge of the Word was minimal, so the going was slow, but glorious. In fact I still get a few ears of corn from that great chapter, even now.

A very learned friend of mine, and great Bible teacher, got something quite different from that first chapter of Genesis. It was revealed to him that the chapter contained a complete index to prophecy for the entire Bible, and the history of the world right to its end. It was truly marvellous, and he wrote a book about it. As it happened, I was enabled to read the manuscript before it was printed, and therefore thought I would share with this giant in the Word my own little revelation. I was both amazed and delighted to see, when his book was printed, that he had incorporated my thoughts with his as an addition. The encouragement I received from that was enormous, for it showed me that he must have recognised that what I had received was as much a revelation from the Spirit as what he had received, even if our respective capacities were very different. And we should realise that this whole area of communication from the Holy Spirit is in itself miraculous, but it was also governed by our own spiritual capacity and knowledge of the Truth.

### **FIVE WAYS OF APPROACHING THE BIBLE**

Apart from those significant things stated by Bishop Joseph Hall, meditation provides us with the richest means of approaching the Bible. You already know, probably, that there are five significant approaches to the Bible, and that each is necessary, and all are complimentary to each other, yet the greatest of these is meditation. To name the five again, they are:

1. First of all, **hearing the Word**. Not in the sense of listening to it, but rather that of **hearkening** to it. Paul told the Romans that this kind of hearing, or hearkening to the Word, gives birth to faith. When God sends the Word to us,

obedience to the command, even in the face of utmost impossibility, is what faith is. Failure to act robs us of the power of faith, and leaves us with the shell of belief - if we do not become sceptics, as some have. Then, the Bible tells us of some who heard the Word, but did not mix it with faith. The result was that they profited nothing.

2. Secondly, we must give attention to **reading the Scriptures**. This enables us to get a panoramic view of Truth, and is one of the greatest aids to our meditation, because it enables the Holy Spirit to draw on our memory of what we have stored through reading. Truth must not only be seen in its immediate contextual passage, but also in the context of the whole body of truth in the entire Book. It provides the greatest deterrent to error. Paul instructed Timothy to give attention to reading, and we should accept the same instruction. It takes only four minutes to read a Bible page slowly, or between two and three minutes quickly. This means that little time is used in reading, say, ten pages daily. And pages are better than chapters, for they give an even diet, whereas chapter lengths vary so considerably.
3. Thirdly, we are required to **study the Word**. This is covered in 2 Timothy 2:15. We should note the terms of the command, namely, that the result of our study is to make us well-pleasing, or approved, unto God. If we are in a Bible school and have godly professors, our study should be approved both by God and the professors, but we could well expect difficulty with any professor whose theology is riddled with unbelief. The word "workman" in the text hints loudly at what is required in study, but its fruit is also revealed, which is, "*we shall not be ashamed, either before God or men*". As we are required to rightly handle and skilfully teach others the Word of Truth, we cannot escape the necessity to study.
4. Fourthly, Proverbs 7:1-3 requires of us that we invest in the **memorising of the Word**, or at least parts of it. It was failure to do this, when the revelation was only a sentence or two that laid Eve open to a successful attack by the tempter. Words convey very different meanings, as anyone who has stood at the marriage altar and pronounced only two words "I will" well knows. To know exactly what God says in his Word will not only save time, but also a lot of needless speculation.
5. These four great avenues, when put to proper use, will channel enormous benefit into our **meditation in the Word**, which is the fifth.

### **How the five approaches to the Bible co-operate in practice**

The healthy student of the Book will make sure that all five ways are functioning together. Of course, it means consecration and hard work. But think of the dividends. We shall consider these dividends in a moment. Before we do however, may I take you back to that word in Luke 6 about loving our enemies, and illustrate how these five things take their share in the fulfilment of profitable meditation and the changing of our lives.

Let us assume that we have an enemy, and hate him too. Now, while **reading** the gospel of Luke we come across the words of Jesus which are completely contrary to our present behaviour. We may first decide to do some **study** on the passage. As we do so, it becomes a very useful thing to discover that the word "love" does not mean a

glowing affection, or even a warm feeling of regard, such as one possesses for a friend or a family member. The word "love" is translated from that well-known Greek word "*agape*", which has more to do with the character of love than a feeling. Here is where real hope lies, for it points the way through by our using sacrificial love, that is, in spite of our feelings, going and doing some loving thing for the person hated. Of course, this will begin to change our feelings for that person too, but sacrifice is involved. I need to lay my life down, and my feelings, just as God did when he was so angry with a world full of sinners, and sin, yet because of his great character of changeless love He did the loving thing and gave His only Son for those who would believe in Him. And did not God's feelings change to towards those who did believe? The Scriptures say that whom He loves, now with feeling and affection, he chastens. In fact, this is the evidence of His changed feeling towards believers, for he treats them as family members, chastening where necessary. If He did not do this, Paul reminds us, it would soon show that we are only half-casts.

See how far we have come. Our **reading** drew attention to the injunction, while the **study** on only one word points the way through. At this point we may decide that the verse needs **committing to memory**. So we set ourselves to that task, until, by constant repetition, it becomes our property. By this time, we have about as much knowledge on the subject as we are likely to get, yet can remain unchanged. But it may so happen that the next preacher we **hear**, uses this very text, and applies the truth strongly. So strongly that we are convinced that we must act. Faith is now beginning to break through, for while we have come to know the mind of God, something is moving within us to bring about the change in our lives. Our **meditation** may be complete by this time, or we may need to get alone with God until our hearts are melted, and we rise from the ashes of our repentance to **go and do** that loving thing for our enemy, which, we trust, will alter everything, and turn our enemy into our friend. Once this is accomplished, the apostle John would say, "*I write to you, young men, because you are strong, the Word of God lives in you, and you have defeated the Evil One.*" You will find that in 1 John 2:14.

## **THE REWARDS OF MEDITATION**

The Scriptures reveal that there are some valuable rewards available for those who meditate in them. Turn first, please, to Psalm 1. We would do well to read the first three verses, and then examine them in detail, for they set out broad principles, both negative and positive. "*Blessed is the man*", it says, "*that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful, but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law does he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season, his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*" Note that the next verse begins by saying "*The ungodly are not so*", and that is true.

### **Preservation from false theories**

The first verse carries an important clue for any young christian who is intending advancing his studies in any branch of knowledge, especially philosophy. Let him learn all the theories man puts forward for various propositions, even in the field of Evolution, but let the christian student beware not to accept the **counsel** of the ungodly theorist. For instance, the counsel, or the seed sown by the evolutionist, is that "*There is no God*". Christian will not allow this seed to enter his inner being as truth, but will keep the details of the theory in his mind only. If he does not, he will

never be able to write his exams with a view to passing them, but while stating what the views of evolutionists are, christian is not obliged to accept these views as established fact. If he does, the seed of atheism will be sown in his heart, and it will not be long before you will find him standing where sinners stand, and that will not be with the congregation of believers. Finally, unless this seed is ejected from his inner being, he will be found sitting in the seat of the scornful, scorning the things he once believed. There is a tremendous difference between what one learns and what one accepts, and it is the truth of the Bible which is well able to act as referee for the christian.

### **Truth guards the heart against destruction**

No wonder Solomon advised that we should guard the heart, for out of it, he said "*are the issues of life*". Medical science tells us that if a dislike or disagreement is allowed to become hatred or resentment it can produce osteo-arthritis in twenty years time. Why? Because hatred and resentment are the seeds that enter the inner being, or subconscious, and there generate destructive growths.

By contrast, consider how happy that man will be who sows his life with the seed of truth. Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:23 that we are born again not of corruptible seed (that is like atheism, hate, superstition, resentment) but of incorruptible by the Word of God which lives and abides for ever. This seed contains power, life - God's kind of life, peace, love etc.. Receiving this seed generates a delight for more of it. This is why the Psalmist pronounces such a blessing on the man who delights in the state of rightness, via the law, with God. As that man meditates in it day and night, which means continually rather than 24 hours a day without ceasing, he is promised that he is going to be like a thriving tree, and whatever he does will prosper. Sounds almost too good to be true in a world like this, but it is true.

### **Meditate in God's law in order to be blessed**

These days there are a lot people who spend much time meditating in the promises of God: that seems to be the back to front way of going about things, for here it says that when we meditate in the law, and that is the law of righteousness, then what God has promised will flow in superabundance **from** it. Jesus confirmed this in Matthew 6:33, by saying "*Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" Priorities are important, and that is why we need to get them right.

### **The fruitful life**

The one who meditates is compared with the well-watered tree, having a secret source of refreshment, which produces good fruit in the right season. It is just like that with meditation. It is essentially a secret exercise, alone with God, which results in spiritual fruitfulness, both inward and outward. By that is meant, the inward fruit of the Spirit's fruit, and the outward fruit of winning others to Christ. But the fruit from this is not the only important thing, but also the leaves of that tree which never wither or fade. That is no surprise when we remember the connection with the tree of life in Revelation 22, "*And the leaves of that tree which heal nations*". What is the tree of life? Revelation 22:14 tells us that it is the doing of the commandments of God, the will of God, and this is exactly what Bible meditation is designed to accomplish. Little wonder that Peter, in the beginning of his second letter, states that we have become partakers of the divine nature through the promises.

### **True prosperity is to bless others**

Added to the promise of fruitfulness is the promise of all we do being prospered by God. There is a prosperity which comes from other sources, but it is only the blessing of the LORD which makes rich without the complications of sorrows caused by those influences to which worldly prosperity is so prone. You only have to observe Joseph in the home and then the prison of Potiphar to see how God fulfils his promise to prosper his servant who had learned to meditate. And please note the terms of that prosperity. For it seems clear that first as a slave, and then as a prisoner, his prosperity benefited all about him instead of him, and this is certainly God's plan with His people. The blessings of God are for use to bless others, not for private enjoyment or consumption. Did not James say that we ask amiss, for we ask God for things so that we can consume them on our own lusts.

The word "prosper" is a very interesting word, for it is sometimes translated, usually in the margin of the text, as "doing wisely". That should be easily understood, for as we meditate in His Word and receive His directions, and live by His commands, His wisdom takes over and runs our lives. What else could prosper so effectively?

### **Causing others to prosper: the example of Joshua**

More detail is given about this in what God said to Joshua, at the commencement of his leadership of Israel resulting from the death of Moses. Followership is always easier than leadership, especially when the prior leadership has been good, which was certainly the case with Moses leadership. But now follower Joshua must lead. If you have your Bible open at Joshua chapter 1, we can together make reference to various statements it contains.

First comes an overall directive, showing God's intention and the basis for Joshua's faith. *"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you"*. There is to be nothing automatic about this. Joshua is to renounce his fears, ignore his enemies' size and terror, and get his feet on the territory assigned to him. Conquest was certain, only needing his obedience, because God had already given the territory to him.

It is interesting to note that when the false prophets of Ahab told him to go up to Ramoth-Gilead and prosper - how similar the language to faith - they could only say *"The LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand."* No, faith is never meant to lead us out onto such a flimsy limb: faith is obedience to the unfailing promise and decision of God *"I have given it to you"*.

Verse 7 of Joshua 1 brings us to an almost restatement of Psalm 1, for Joshua is told to observe all the law, so that wherever he went he would be able to effect total conquest. Note again that the word "prosper" is again translated "do wisely" in your margin, if you have one in your Bible.

But where was Joshua to draw the strength to be able to do what the LORD required? What about the necessary strength of will and desire of heart? Verse 8 covers this by saying that the law should not depart out of his mouth, but he was to meditate in it continually, day and night. Of course, once it ruled his heart, his mouth would speak out of the abundance of his heart.

### **Sense of God's presence**

There is one more thing to be observed in the passage, and that is the connection



between the ends of verses 7 and 9. **His** observing of the laws and ways of God would cause him to prosper wherever he went in verse 7 whereas in verse 9 God commands his courage on the basis of **God** being with him wherever he went. It seems obvious that God's presence or the sense of His presence, for from one aspect He is ever-present, is dependent on our meditation of Him and His law.

If we turn to Ezekiel chapter 1 we will find a reason for God's presence being connected with His Word coming to us, which is the prize of meditation. It says in verse 3, the Word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel, **and** *"the hand of the LORD was there upon him"*. This is better felt than telt, as the Scots would say. When we wait upon the LORD in His Word, when we know that the Holy Spirit is giving that Word to us personally, it strengthens us in a unique way and gives us a power that others know little about. Isn't this exactly what happened when God bore witness to your heart that He had saved you? Were you not elated about it? Were you not made strong? Did you not feel as if the LORD's hand was with you?

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT: CHRISTIAN'S PRIME TEACHER**

It is essential for the christian who is going to meditate to come into a new relationship with the Holy Spirit. By that I mean, we have to not only recognise the Holy Spirit as our prime teacher, but we need to let Him fulfill this position. We need to **accept** Him as our prime teacher - prime, because he also teaches through those to whom **He** has given a teaching ministry in the church. Not every Bible teacher has been given this ministry **by the LORD**. Would you turn to 1 John 2:27, where we read from verse 26, *"I write you this about those who are trying to deceive you, but as for you, Christ has poured out His Spirit on you. As long as His Spirit remains in you, you do not need anyone to teach you, for the Spirit teaches you about everything, and what He teaches is true, not false. Obey the Spirit's teaching then, and remain in Christ"*. Great verse.

Again, let us beware of pride, for all power carries built-in dangers. And let us make sure that we turn up to the Spirit's teaching classes. I mean, make sure that you are found waiting upon Him daily in prayerful meditation, so that He can take the things of Christ, that is in the Word, and show them to you. Let no one think they shall be taught of the LORD if they do not give the necessary time to be taught. Listen to Isaiah prophesying in Chapter 54:13; *"And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD, and great shall be the peace of thy children"*. John 6:45 pulls up alongside this, quoting Isaiah, and says *"It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God, any man that has heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Me'"*.

#### **The teaching of the Holy Spirit illustrated**

You have a lovely foreshadowing, or type, of the Holy Spirit's ministry of teaching in what Moses was told by his wise old father-in-law priest in Exodus 18:19-21. As we read it, recognise how it typifies the Holy Spirit:

*"Be thou for the people to Godward, that thou mayest bring the causes to God"*. Let us note just what He does. Romans 8 tells us that He *"makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"*, and also that He *"makes intercession for us according to the will of God"*. You will find that in verses 26 and 27.

Exodus 18:20, *"And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws"* - that is what we were so recently talking about - *"and shall show them the way wherein they must*

walk" - Who else but the Holy Spirit knows that way? - and Jesus is The Way - *"and the work that they must do"*. Well, it is the Holy Spirit who not only does the work of God through God's people, but He is also Lord of the harvest, and appoints labourers over it.

*"Moreover thou shall provide over the people able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, etc."*. The Holy Spirit's function in this can hardly be disguised in the church, though men try to substitute that ministry. But Paul told the Galatians (Chapter 1:1), *"From Paul, whose call to be an apostle did not come from men, or by means of man, but from Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead"*. The vital thing to understand is that those who wish to know and receive a call like that must be willing to wait upon the LORD, to meditate, and to receive His communication without wishful thinking.

### **The need to obey the will of God, and not twist it**

We will look at Joshua 1 again: this time we take a sentence from verse 7. *"Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper"* This warning is essential to those who would meditate, for if we do not obey what He communicates in meditation, the fountain of inspiration will dry up. He has no interest in making hypocrites. A hypocrite knows what is right, but fails to do it. If we look at a merely natural interpretation of the right and left, to which we are not to turn, we may observe that the right side is our strong side, and our familiar side. Beware of these two elements spiritually, and never interpret truth, or obedience to it, at this level.

The left represents the weak, and unfamiliar side. Some take it for granted that such will be the direction God wants them to take. Beware of it. I know a sister in Christ who automatically felt that when there was a choice in the way she was to take, God wanted her to take the way that was difficult, even boring, against all for which she was gifted. Whenever she was meditating in the Word, her bias always turned her in this direction, so that she felt that anything the Scriptures said in this connection was for her. If I may say so, she always turned to the left, instead of going straight forward in the will of God, as subsequent events in her life proved.

At the same time we must beware that we do not bend the Word to suit our natural strength, our right hand. The injunction from Deuteronomy 5:32 is therefore timely, *"You shall observe to do therefore as the LORD hath commanded you, you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left"*. Proverbs 4:27 adds weight by saying *"Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil"*.

## **CHRISTIAN'S PART IN MEDITATION**

### **Meditation is hard work, but rewarding**

Meditation is the most difficult form of approaching the Bible. This is because it is a totally spiritual exercise. The rewards are so great that the effort is more than worth it, but you should realise that your own flesh will fight and resist you. This is where discipline must be applied so that your body and your will understand that the Spirit in you working through your own submitted spirit is in command of your whole being. Those who give into their feelings, especially laziness, and the lie that other things are more important, will be the losers. The 119th Psalm deals throughout with the Word of God, and by the 162nd verse the Psalmist cries, *"I rejoice at Thy Word, as one that findeth great spoil"*. He felt what the authors of the old pirate stories always tried to portray when the pirates at last discovered their hidden treasure.

Jeremiah shares this by saying in chapter 15:16, *"Thy words were found and I did eat them"*, not study them only, *"and Thy word was unto me, the joy and rejoicing of mine heart, for I am called by Thy name, O LORD, God of hosts."*

### **The practice of meditation**

The question now arises, "How do I go about meditation, and what do I bring to bear for its accomplishment?", for while there is the part the Holy Spirit plays, I must obviously play my part too. That is correct.

Turn please to Proverbs chapter 4, and we shall read from verse 20. *"My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes, keep them in the midst of thine heart, for they are life unto those that find them, and health"* - or as the margin states there "medicine" - *"to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues"*, or "out-goings", *"of life"*. These verses come at the conclusion of a chapter which has been expounding the glories of divine wisdom, and this is the wisdom which God is willing to endow on those who will meditate in His Word and translate truth into obedience. This is why the alternate translation "to prosper" in Joshua chapter 1 is "to do wisely". Now note the four things which we are to do:

1. **"Attend to my words"**. This is where the mind fulfils its important function. Concentration is needed.

Hair-splitting must be avoided with care, though meanings should be understood and appreciated. It is better to obtain the meanings of difficult words from a concordance like "Young's" for instance, than to reach for a dictionary. The reason for this is that words change their meanings as the centuries roll by, and the dictionary can be too up-to-date, thus missing the real import of what God has said.

It is also very important to compare Scripture with Scripture, for Bible words are not interpreted merely by technical meanings, but just as much by principle. By that, I mean that it is necessary to observe how things work out in the Bible, how God demonstrates a particular thing, before its full meaning can be appreciated.

For instance, if one takes the word "justification" as used, say, in Romans 3:24, *"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*. Now the word "justify" means "to make or declare right". Quite frankly, that does not impart much information, and certainly not enough to make me overflow with joy.

As we now begin to consider how God can make or declare me to be right when I know very well my guiltiness through sin, certain Scriptures are brought immediately to mind. For example, *"And you, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross."* That Scripture is found in Colossians 2:13-14. This is that redemption which is in Christ Jesus, but justification is greater than just atonement. For if I am to be declared right in His sight, that is, fully reinstated, what about the memory of past guilt, even though I am now forgiven? At once another Scripture comes to mind about the way God forgives. It says, *"And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and"*, here it comes, "I

*will remember their sin now more.*" Jeremiah 31:34, and it is again quoted for us in Hebrews chapter 10, verses 16 and 17. Now I can see a basis for full and legal justification, for if Jesus paid my guilt legally, and as I repent and believe, God not only forgives, but also **forgets** what I have done.

Mmm. No wonder Paul cries out with irrepressible joy in Romans 8:33, *"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, it is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again"*. Indeed, He was raised from death because we **were** fully justified, and this gives us great comfort for everyday living, for if we sin, we should immediately confess our sin. What we confess, He forgives, and we should gratefully accept that forgiveness, instead of engaging in penance. He wants repentance, not penance. And what God forgives, He forgets, so let us not come before Him to confess a thing a second time, for He will not know what we are on about. We remember our sins but God does not: we are justified. Where is the chance of developing a guilt complex?

As the mind has grasped all that is involved in justification, our heart should accept it, and immediately we will find healing forces permeating our whole being where hitherto guilt had brought disruption. The truth of the Word brings healing to all our flesh, because there is peace of mind and jubilation of heart, but who knows these things?

Who does not ply his mind to investigate them? *"My people perish for lack of knowledge"*, God has said. Do not fail to appreciate the connection between the mind and the heart, study and meditation. The truths about justification do no good, and bring no deliverance unless the heart accepts them, and rejoices in them. And to have knowledge without appropriation is to suffer from enlightened misery. But many are waiting for some revelation to the heart without bringing their mind to bear on what the Bible says about these things.

2. **"Incline thine ear unto my sayings"**. This time it isn't study or research that is implied, but the giving of a willing and open ear to what God has to say, in whatever way He chooses to say it.

God has chosen this sense of ours as the channel along which He may bring faith to our hearts. So then, says Romans 10:17, *"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching"*. Now God has chosen the foolish method of preaching, as well as a so-called foolish message, in order that those who hear may believe.

Why is the method foolish? Well, stop and think for a moment. There sit or stand a bunch of people listening to a man proclaiming dogmatic truths. It goes against the grain. We would rather discuss or debate, for it is more rational, but to listen to someone churning out dogmatic pronouncements and saying, "so says the LORD" is foolish, but God has chosen it.

Why has He chosen it? Because it is through the dogmatic declaration, provided that it **is** what God has said, that faith comes to a sinner's heart. This is the way the seed of divine truth and life is sown in the heart, even though there are ways of stopping its entrance. This does not mean that faith cannot reach the heart until we hear the Word preached, but it does mean there must be a willingness to accept what God has said even before we understand it. The fact is that much cannot be understood until it is believed, for God in His wisdom has planned it that way.

In 1 Corinthians 1:21 the Holy Spirit has revealed this: *"God in His wisdom*

*made it impossible for men to know Him by means of their own wisdom. Instead God decided to save those who believe by means of the foolish message we preach." It is accounted foolish because it in no way plays up to human wisdom or philosophy, but begins with the cross. This is what meekness is, and you know what a power that was in Moses' life, for the world has not met the likes of that since except in Jesus.*

*"Incline your ear to my sayings", it says. Yes, watch Jesus follow this up, He who is the expression of God's wisdom. So then, He says, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them, will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, and the wind blew hard against that house, but it didn't fall because it had been built on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not obey them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded over, the wind blew hard against that house, and it fell. What a terrible fall that was." These words of Jesus give us ample light on the way we are to hear.*

3. **"Let them not depart from your eyes"**. We considered the mind and the ears, but now we come to a very vulnerable part of our anatomy. We are to keep God's Word continually before our eyes.

Of course, a literal interpretation is impossible, for then we should only trip and fall whereas the injunction is given to prevent a fall - into sin. No part of us registers temptations' wavelength quicker than the eyes. And when the eyes take in something which should awaken lust within us, there is immediate deliverance **if** our heart refuses any further co-operation with what has been seen. Temptation is not sin. Sin starts just as soon as we **yield** to temptation.

For example, our eyes may see something pornographic. The appeal to the heart is unmistakable, and the call to look again, and dwell upon it is insistent. At that very moment, our mind remembers the words of Jesus, *"He that looks to lust has already committed adultery in the heart"*, and the battle is on. If we take our eyes away from the commandment, the battle is lost, but if we keep our eyes on the commandment, the battle is won and we are able to overcome.

What enters through the eyes on the first look only goes as far as the mind, but willingness to engage in the second look causes the seed of sin to fall into our inner being where it conceives, as James tells us, bringing forth a sinful act later, and still later bringing forth death. Little wonder that Jesus told us that if our eye offends us, it is better to gouge it out and enter life with one eye, rather than keep both eyes and end up in hell. How necessary to remember the words of Jesus on the Mount, when He instructed His disciples about a single eye, concluding with these words, *"If the light in you turns out to be darkness, how terribly dark it will be"*.

4. **"Keep them in the midst of thy heart"**. Mind, ears, eyes and now the citadel itself, the heart, the place of conviction, the place where doubts assail and only faith, based on the living Word of God can conquer.

Jesus revealed that faith has two sides to it. In Mark 11:23 He said, *"If you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you."* It is like any double-sided coin. On the one side it says, *"believe"*, whereas on the other side it says - this is the tough part - *"doubt not in your heart"*.

Believing presents no problem if one accepts the inspiration of the Scriptures,

and proved in any degree the validity of God's promises. But not to doubt in the heart, the place of conviction, is different. Where does the power come from, to be able to expel every doubt from the heart? The secret is to receive the impartation of divine faith, and not to struggle with the inherent weaknesses of human faith. If the disciples were to hear the accusing words of Jesus, "*O ye of little faith*", how much more is it likely to apply to us.

Right, but from where do we get divine faith, which Ephesians 2:8 says is not of ourselves, for it is the gift of God? Divine faith comes when God gives us His word, gives it to meet our personal needs, gives it with the witness of the Holy Spirit so that we know that this word is the mind of God for our situation. Psalm 107:20 says "**He** sent His word and healed them". This word is usually received as we meditate, but once it is received, the problems are not over, even if the deliverance has begun. There are often battles to be fought, the challenge of the enemy to be overcome, etc.. This is why we are told to keep the Word in the midst of our heart. Don't let it get out on the fringes.

It is wise to follow the example of Hezekiah, who received word from God about the enemy that were encircling his city. The circumstances did not change immediately, but Hezekiah, of whom it is recorded that he trusted God more than any other king before or after him, placed the word in the centre of his being, and went to bed for a good night's sleep. When he awoke in the morning, it was to see what God had done during the night, and 185,000 of the enemy troops lay dead on the ground. To have the Word in the midst of the heart is the whole answer to human anxiety.

When anyone lives by this rule, with mind, ears, eyes and heart centred on the Word of God, how better could they be described than in the way Jeremiah has done in his chapter 17:7-8? "Blessed is the man", he says, "that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is, for he shall be as a tree" - very similar to Psalm 1, notice - "planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, for her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." It is well to say here that when a tree bears fruit, that fruit is not for the tree, but is designed to feed others, and also to reproduce.

### **The Bread of God is like the Manna**

Now, concerning the receiving of the Word of God, we shall go to a passage in the Old Testament where it is portrayed to us in magnificent detail, and while we examine the detail let us be careful to apply every part of our receiving mechanism, so that God can speak to us, challenge us to the conduct of a better and more disciplined life in the Spirit, and at the same time feed us. Turn to Exodus chapter 16, and rather than read the whole chapter first, we shall go through it verse by verse, selecting relevant parts for our meditation and instruction.

### **The danger of over-spiritualisation**

*"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin."* Incidentally, before we over-spiritualise the Scripture - and some do this - it is wise to note that "Sin" here does not mean error, guilt or failure: it is the name of a desert between Elim and Sinai, and its name means "a cliff" or "place". This is where rightly dividing the Word of Truth becomes necessary. We are not given any right to turn to the right hand by interpreting such

things as we will, or because we might have got a bright idea. We must listen for the Holy Spirit.

### **The need to change diet**

*"Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. On the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt." That means, it was exactly one month after the day of the Passover, which ceremony ran from the tenth to the fourteenth day of the first month.*

This chapter is going to show us how God gave Israel manna to eat, a supply of heavenly bread, which symbolises the Word of Truth for us, and this statement shows that God wasted no time in getting Israel onto their new diet. The youngest christian not only can, but must, change his diet from the old to the new. Their supply of the old food from Egypt was running short, so we read from verse 2, *"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the children of Israel said unto them, 'Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full, for ye have brought us forth into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger'."*

This is strikingly representative of the new believer's position. Before he was saved he used to soak up periodicals, magazines, novels, and perhaps some of the more refined literature works, but all of them, refined or coarse, spring from the fleshpots. Since becoming a christian, he finds that new desires have sprung up within, and older believers now instruct him to get into the Bible. Instead of feeding him on the milk of the Word, which any mother would do, older christians expect him to be able to feed himself. This is unreasonable, to say the least, but they must not wonder when these babes in Christ complain against their spiritual leaders for putting them on a death course. Their fleshpot food used to satisfy their soulish desires very well, but now they find themselves cut off from that, and with an added problem, namely a spiritual hunger too. It was natural, but far from spiritual, to look back to Egypt, when they should have been looking forward to the promised land, realising that the God who had called them out, was not only able to bring them in, but also able to sustain them en route. Christians need to realise the same.

### **The difference between Israel and the church affects interpretation**

Verse 4: *"Then said the LORD unto Moses, 'Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.'"* As you can probably already see, this verse is loaded with spiritual material. It should be said at this point that Israel and the church are two very different kinds of people, and yet irrevocably connected. It was Paul who reminded the Gentile church that we had been grafted into the tree, and that it is not the branch that bears the root but the root which bears the branch. Though connected however, we are very different: Israel are God's earthly people, whereas the church is God's spiritual people. Israel fought physical battles with their enemies, and still do. The church is told that their battle is not with flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces which motivate flesh and blood. Similarly, in our 16th chapter of Exodus, what God does to supply Israel with **natural** bread to eat, He does to supply the church with **living** bread.

### **The bread from heaven comes in small drops**

Observe the salient features which the verse displays. God says *"I will rain bread from heaven."* This means there is going to be an abundant supply and will be available to every believer, but it also means that it will come in tiny drops, not in bucket's full. We will be seeing in verse 14, that it was a *"small round thing"*, and how better to describe a raindrop. Meditation is not going to yield an overwhelming revelation in five minutes. We have to be patient, attentive, receiving the slightest raindrop that is given. It is through the accumulation of raindrops that the trickle begins, then the river, then the ocean. Many get discouraged because they do not experience a deluge while waiting upon God, but how wise God is in this. Think naturally for a moment. If you are out walking in cloudy weather, you can be very thankful that rain always starts with a few drops first. If you suddenly experienced a hundred gallon splash life would be very uncomfortable in rainy weather.

### **Inspiration must come from heaven**

Look now at Deuteronomy chapter 11, verses 10 and 11. *"For the land whither thou goest in to possess it is not as the land of Egypt from whence you came out, where thou sowest thy seed and waterest it with thy foot as a garden of herbs. But the land whither you go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven."* Our inspiration is not to come from beneath, the Egypt way, but from above, and this is the only way God has designed that it should come, drop by drop.

### **Spiritual strength depends on regular feeding: The lazy get nothing**

The next thing to note is that the people were commanded to go out and gather it. If they didn't they would be the losers. It was not designed to come to them, nothing would come to the lazy individual. They were to gather a certain rate, and later we shall see how this was determined. Suffice it to say now, a steady diet is far more healthy than varying amounts each day. We have to discover our capacity. The whole instruction in this verse takes on great importance when God says that He would make this a test of their obedience. In other words, if they would not obey this simple instruction, they would not be likely to obey more important instructions.

### **"Quiet times" - a test of discipleship, the source of power**

Maybe this helps us understand why our daily "Quiet times", as we call them - why should they have to be quiet - are so severely challenged by the world, our own flesh and the devil. These times are designed to be a breaking through point of discipleship. You see, if a christian is going to be strong and able to overcome his enemies, his power flows from a relationship with the LORD who is his power, who is the living bread. Psalm 104:15 says, *"Bread which strengthens men's heart"*. Psalm 78:23 reveals that God commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat, and gave them the corn of heaven. Man did eat angel's food. Isaiah tells how he collected his daily supply in chapter 50, verse 4: *"He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The LORD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious."* Proverbs 20:13 warns, *"Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty. Open thine eyes, and thou wilt be satisfied with bread."* It is a major tragedy in the church that so many older christians are weak and faint spiritually, simply because they did not observe this warning, and day after day failed to come and eat from this divinely prepared table.

### **Sheep can feed on God: complaining against leaders is against God**

We shall now jump to the endings of both verses 7 and 8 in Exodus 16. The first says,



*"What are we that you murmur against us?"; the second says, "And what are we, your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD." So often one hears God's people complaining against their pastors and teachers that they do not feed them. This bread does not come from pastors or teachers: this bread comes alone from God.*

Remember 1 John 2:27. A pastor or teacher can only share what he has already eaten - provided he **has** eaten it. If it did not touch his life first, there is little hope of it touching anyone else's. No shepherd can give grass from himself to a sheep, but he can lead the sheep to where the grass is. The shepherd cannot eat the grass for the sheep. The sheep must eat it for itself. The leading of a shepherd is a blessing to sheep, but even where there is no shepherd, the sheep can still eat grass. Christians forget this. Let the pastor teacher lead the flock to where the grass is, but let us not accuse the shepherd groundlessly. That second verse shows that when we complain against God's servants, our complaint is really against God. That should make us hold our tongue. Again in Psalm 78, the Psalmist complains on God's behalf in verse 19 in this way, *"Yea, they speak against God. They said, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?'"* God is never pleased with such juvenile behaviour.

### **God's food is small like dew-drops**

Now continue at verse 13 in Exodus 16, again. *"In the morning the dew lay round about the host, and when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, 'It is manna'"* - or as the margin says, *"What is this?"*, or as we might say, *"It's a what's this"* - *"for they wist not what it was. And Moses said to them 'This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat'"*. It often takes more than one simile to illustrate truth. In this section however, we do not have to travel too far. We go from rain to dew. Of course, there is no difference in the substance, but certainly in the texture.

Raindrops are very big in comparison with dew-drops. I mention this only to make the point that when the Holy Spirit begins to communicate with us through meditation, his starting point may be with the tiniest thought, but we are to gather it. And dew is never one dew-drop, but an accumulation of them, and this you will also find to be true with meditation, for one divinely inspired thought will soon lead to another, *"a small round thing"*, hard to describe but excellent to experience.

### **Revelation has built-in humility**

Knowledge often needs explanation, but not truth. Truth is revealed by the Holy Spirit, yet it is unbearable when some take a superior position over others because they have not or are deemed not to have received revelation. With such an attitude, their so-called revelation is suspect. Revelation possesses built-in humility. The man who has eaten does not need to be proud, only thankful, whereas the man who thinks he has a new recipe might well be proud. Hunger satisfied is always better than brilliant declarations.

### **Scripture is for feeding on**

There is one more thing worth noting in verse 15. *"This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat"*. God has ordained the Scriptures, not as a battlefield for denominations, but as food for his people, and we are to treat them as such. Let others argue and fight about verbal inspiration, historical backgrounds etc., but we are to get on with feeding on the truth. Let us be convinced about this, and let it become a christian fixity us. Hear 2 Timothy 3:16: *"For all Scripture is inspired by God, and is*

*useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the man who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good work."*

### **How much should we meditate?**

From verses 16 to 18, we get the measure of the daily rate, that I promised to come to. *Gather of it every man according to his eating, and the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. He who gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating.*" You will find this to be perfectly true. If you spent the entire day in meditation, you could not receive an overdose, and if you only glean a little to start the day with, it will prove sufficient. This is because of the Word's everlasting quality.

### **How much we eat will determine our spiritual growth**

One thing should be borne in mind though, and that is that our daily intake is going to finally determine our growth in Christ and in spiritual truth. Years ago, I learned of a very humble Scot who, as he had to leave home very early each morning to walk to his place of labour, used the whole of that long walk to meditate in the Word. He would stop under each lamp, and get the hang of the next verse, and then meditate on it to the next lamp a long way off, where he would stop and take in the next verse. Eventually that brother became a leading Bible teacher. The more you take, the more your appetite increases.

### **Today's meditation is only for today**

Another warning comes in verse 20. *"They hearkened not unto Moses, but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank."* This also has an application to those who meditate. What the Holy Spirit gives you today is only for today. If you try to live on it tomorrow, you will find that its flavour has changed. The christian's spirit is kept fresh by the continual intake of fresh living bread.

### **Early morning is the best time to meditate**

Yet another warning comes in verse 21, which says, *"And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating. And when the sun waxed hot it melted."* Years of experience have proved that the best time for Bible meditation is before the day gets started, in fact before any meal is taken. When we rise first thing in the morning, our spirits are usually quiet and submissive and open to God. But you will notice that once you take your first meal, your whole attitude to the day changes: you then want to get down to work, and this wrecks any chance of quiet meditation. This does not mean that the early morning is the only time to meditate, for that would put night-shift workers and nurses in a dilemma, but it does signify that there is a time and place that is ideal, and we will do well to observe this.

### **Only meditate six days a week**

From verses 22 to 28 there follows a very interesting and important commandment concerning the manna. They were to gather twice as much on the sixth day, and there would be none on the seventh. This was the one day, the seventh, when what was gathered the day before would not become corrupt.

It has been my experience, and the experience of others, that it is better to meditate for only six days per week, and not seven. By all means take in a double portion on the sixth day, and that is advisable, but the reason for not meditating on the seventh day is so that you can take a much needed rest. Meditation is hard work on the flesh, and if

you want the power and desire to continue meditating for many years to come, then it is advisable to rest from it once a week.

If not, you will become weary, not at the beginning, but later on. You may feel so inspired in the first few weeks or months that you feel that a day's rest from meditation is a waste. It is not. You do well to observe such a sabbath rest, whichever day you choose for that, and in view of what happens on a busy christian Sunday, I would advise that you take the break on Sunday. What you have gleaned through the week will stay fresh for your use on Sunday, both for your own needs, and also for the needs of others. We will come back to verse 31 in a moment.

### **The Scriptures mix men's experience with God's law**

Please look now at verses 32 to 34, and you will see the very purpose for the Scriptures having been written at all. Moses was instructed to fill an omer of the manna to be kept for all their Israeli generations. The reason was so that their children could see the bread on which their fathers had fed. Aaron put it in the ark before the testimony. That means it was put away alongside the tables on which the law was written.

This is exactly what has happened with the good Book in our hands. The experiences through which godly men have passed have been very briefly written and stored away for us with the law of God, in detail, so that we can see what it was that fed and sustained them.

### **Scriptures are "dehydrated food", "re-hydrated" by the Holy Spirit**

In fact, the written word that we have is like soup powder for it has been dehydrated. Now by that I mean, when Abraham offered his son Isaac, for example, the whole story is recorded for us within one chapter, but you can be sure that his dealings with God, led and guided by the Holy Spirit - symbolised in the water - were lengthy and thorough. We do not know all that was said to Abraham, neither do we know what he prayed, apart from what is recorded. The record is very brief, but sufficient for anyone to glean from it what is needed in a similar crisis. When that crisis arises, the Holy Spirit will take those words again, and re-hydrate them during meditation, thus making God's Word both palatable and desirable, as Abraham found them.

The whole of the Bible is like this, and it takes the Holy Spirit to re-hydrate it. Whenever a guest comes to visit you, you wouldn't dream of serving them with two teaspoonfuls of soup powder on a plate: you restore the water and bring it up to the required temperature so that its originality is restored. That is how it works with the Word too.

### **Mixed attitudes to Scripture alter its flavour**

Now one last thing in verse 31. It states that the manna tasted like "*wafers made with honey*" - rather delicious I would think. But now look at Numbers chapter 11. From verse 4 we see that there was a mixed multitude that went out of Egypt with Israel, and they began to lust after the old Egyptian diet of cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. Most of those things give the eater a foul breath afterwards. This makes others draw back from close proximity with them.

Listen to their complaint: "*But now our soul is dried away. There is nothing at all beside this manna before our eyes. And the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.*" Ugh. What changed the taste from wafers and honey to something like castor oil? The

manna did not change, but their taste changed. They were a mixed multitude, and the manna tested them and uncovered their mixture. Bible meditation soon uncovers the mixture in us too.

Who are this mixed multitude? I suggest that they are those who believe with the head but not the heart. They are those who want the blessings of the LORD without coming the way of the cross themselves. They want heaven without the sacrifice of renouncing the world and worldliness. They only play with righteousness, because at the same time they are playing with sin. All down the line there is mixture, and this reacts against the pure Word of God, as surely as Judas went out to make arrangements to betray Jesus when he saw the pure devotion of the woman who washed Jesus's feet with tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed him with ointment from the alabaster box.

So what did they do? Verse 8 says that after they gathered it, they "**ground it in mills**", just as some do today with the Bible, grinding away over words and their meanings, splitting hairs and bruising the truth.

Or they "**beat it in a mortar**", just as some do now, forming it into a paste which they label as their new theology. There is nothing wrong with theology, for the word means the study of God, but these do not study God. It would have been better for them if they had. Instead they wrested certain Scriptures and spelled out their own destruction by misusing them.

Others "**baked it in pans**", thus forming it into a fixed shape of some denominational emphasis. Who said we had to have these statements of faith? We were not told to have them, but we were told to produce the good works, or the works of the Father, before men, so they would see His manifested power through us and glorify God. Away with these fried pancakes.

Others "**made cakes**" of it. And this seems to me to be **some** of the useless commentaries that are available. Please don't think that all commentaries are useless: I am talking about those produced by those that evidence a mixture and who criticise those who have experienced God but have not shown scholarly gift.

Life is better than learning. Nevertheless, I think it is right that those who have experienced the power of God and the gifts of the Holy Spirit should study, and be able to bring forth an answer for the hope that is within them. But woe to those who bring forth answers for a hope they do not possess, or a false hope. Let us beware of the influence of the mixed multitude in the church of God, and take the necessary steps for recovery if we sense that our taste for Living Word of Truth is being affected.

This paper presents Denis G Clark's teaching on Bible Meditation in the most condensed and literary form he ever produced. It is a transcript of a pair of lectures prepared as tape recorded lectures for the "Cassette Bible College" (Foundation lectures F3 & F4). The body of the text is unaltered, only the headings paragraphing, punctuation etc. have been provided by the editor.

This series of notes provide a basic treatment of the topic, to stimulate personal bible study. Every effort has been made to be accurate, but the reader should test everything (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21). Errors, or queries which are unresolved after consulting

the LORD, should be referred to the editor: [Richard H Johnston](#)

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