

COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (THROUGH MEDITATION II)

We are continuing with the thought of 2 Timothy 3:7 - "...ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." In previous articles we discussed four steps to really coming to the knowledge of the truth: education, meditation, participation, and evaluation. In the last article, meditation was discussed. But this is such an important topic, and there is so much material in the scriptures that we need to study the idea of meditation a little farther.

Meditation is the link between our education and our participation, or what we know and how we apply what we know. Consider the following statements as they relate to our meditations controlling our actions:

- "The problem with talking too fast is that you say things you haven't thought of yet." - Ann Landers, American Advice Columnist.
- "You become what you think about. Think scared, you'll be scared. Think passionate, you'll be passionate. Trace your feelings, and you'll discover they come from your thoughts."
- "Meanness don't jes' happen overnight." -Old Farmer's Proverb.

Two great thoughts about meditation are given to us by David. In Psalms 1:1,2 he wrote that a man was blessed who delighted in the law of the Lord and meditated on it day and night. Then in Psalms 19:14 he stated his own desire that the words of his mouth and the meditations of his heart would be acceptable in the sight of God. Those are two great truths to live by!

But what's so special about meditation? Why is it worthy of study, and why does it take such a place in the Bible? I believe it's because meditation is so closely linked to our motivation. Our thoughts inspire us to whatever mediocrity or greatness we attain in this life, and whether we will make it to heaven in the life to come.

Now let's consider a few observations concerning meditation.

DAVID'S MEDITATIONS PREPARED HIS HEART TO SUPPORT UNSUSPECTED ACTIONS. 2 Samuel 12:15-23 tells the story of the prophet Nathan convicting David in his heart of his sin with Bathsheba. Because of his sin, David's son was sick and at the point of death. David was so sorrowful that he lay on the ground and would not be comforted. After seven days the child died. David's servants hesitated to tell him for fear of what he would do to himself, but when David perceived the child was dead he arose, washed and anointed himself, changed his clothes, worshipped God, and did eat. This surprised the servants and they asked him about the unexpected behavior. David's reply reveals his deep meditations, probably during the seven days of his intense sorrow - "...now he is dead, wherefore shall I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." Only through meditation could David give such a response when a normal person would have been in extreme grief and despair. How important are our meditations in times of intense suffering!

ALL THINGS ARE CREATED IN THE MIND FIRST. Aside from a few purely accidental discoveries, this statement holds true in all things in our lives, whether physical, mental, or emotional. We meditate on ideas and turn them into reality. Can the same be said for things spiritual? According to Philippians 2:12 we have a responsibility to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This applies to each one of us in our own personal situations. So the salvation we must work out is not the saving blood of Christ - that's the same for everyone. It is the way we each must respond in our separate situations that requires our meditation on spiritual things to get it right.

CONTENTMENT CAN BE LEARNED, BUT IN THE MIND. In Philippians 4:11,12 Paul speaks of his contentment in the face of uncomfortable physical conditions. How could this be without contented meditations? Only by strong meditation can a person be content when the flesh is hurting. But notice especially that Paul learned to be content. This is all mental, through meditation.

WITHOUT MEDITATION WE DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT. Paul exhorted Timothy (1 Timothy 1:6,7) to avoid those that spoke like "vain jangling" and those who did not understand what they said. Think of what Paul is trying to say. In essence he's saying if we do not meditate about what we're going to say, then whatever we say will be by accident and may be vain. It has been said that talk is cheap, but a Christian will pay a high price for idle vain words.

WE MUST MEDITATE TO KEEP THINGS OUT OF THE MIND. While much of meditation involves enabling us to do or perform something, it also has a very important role in keeping things out of the mind. The following three ideas are things that Christians should not have in their minds, and meditation is the key to keeping these negative thoughts at bay:

- **WORRY.** Philippians 4:6 tells us to "*be careful for nothing.*" A good interpretation of this phrase means to not have high anxiety or excess worry. In other words we should be concerned about things, but not to the point of worry. But how do we not worry? By meditating and turning all our imagined situations over to God, in the way that the rest of this passage advises.
- **SHAKINESS OF MIND.** In 2 Thessalonians 2:1,2 we are advised to "*be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled*" concerning the "*day of Christ*". This verse aims directly at our meditations. If they are not on a firm foundation and are shaky, then we will show it in our lives. We will be easily led by the whims and fantasies of others, and will never feel completely dependent on God. But if we meditate on God's principles and doctrines, which are like an anchor to the soul, we will think and act above the foolishness of others.
- **THE TERROR OF OUR ADVERSARIES.** Study the beauty of Philippians 1:27,28. It speaks of our spirit, mind, and faith. Then it speaks of something we are not to have - a feeling of terror caused by our adversaries. As long as Christians live on the earth there will be adversaries that will seek to persecute and terrorize them. But it's up to each Christian to accept or reject the terror. In most cases the scriptures will forbid us from forcefully stopping the persecution, but we have an obligation to reject the terror. In fact, the rejection of the terror is a chance to make a point for our religion against our adversaries, according to this verse.

WE MUST MEDITATE TO PUT PROPER THINGS IN THE MIND. While meditation is certainly useful for keeping bad things out of the mind, a much more positive purpose is to put good things into our minds. My own theory is that if I am constantly striving to meditate on good things, there's less room for any bad thoughts to squeeze into my mind. Consider the thought in these passages about things to put into our minds through meditation:

- **A HIGH TARGET.** Colossians 3:1,2 tells us to seek things above where Christ sits, to set our "*affection on things above, not*

on things on the earth." Notice that this is an exercise of the mind - an exercise in meditations. Why? Because we have not been to heaven, have not seen it, have not walked its streets, nor do we think we will while in this life. So this command to set our affections is by design an act of purposeful meditation.

- THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST. Philippians 2:5-8 tells us to have a mind like was in Christ Jesus who made himself of no reputation, took the form of a servant, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death. Quite a contrast to the high thoughts of the previous passage, but this lowly "mind" will serve us well in this life to get us to a high heavenly life. By meditating on what it means for Christ to have done these lowly things as an example for us, we will expect less from this life and appreciate more of what we have. And if we could actually meditate and develop a mind like Christ in ourselves, what a great treasure that would be!

THE RESPONSE OF OUR LOVE MEDITATIONS. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Paul gives fifteen characteristics of love (charity). Look closely and see how many are mental and so are directly connected with meditation. For example, consider the characteristic of not being "easily provoked". This will result in a physical display of much patience, but it begins with powerful meditations against anger and impatience. I get the idea from some people that love is this natural thing that just happens, and if you love someone you can say and do about anything you want just because you love them. But this passage requires some interpersonal skills that just don't come naturally, so we must meditate to develop and maintain an attitude of love at God's level.

CONCLUDING MEDITATIONS. How important our meditations are! I cannot overstate how important it is to each of us to control our meditations, for our deeds and words will surely follow and we will be judged by both (Matthew 12:36; 16:27). Please meditate on these ideas and judge them to be true for you or not, and you will be closer to coming to the knowledge of the truth.

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Will you explain what is meant the phrase "led by the Spirit"?

ANSWER: This question brings up a serious issue that every child of God should be concerned about. The fact that there are so many conflicting ideas on this subject has led many to avoid a discussion of the leading of the Holy Spirit. If the Bible deals with an issue then it is imperative that we as students of the Word study it, find the truth about it, and then be obedient to it.

Unfortunately, the phrase led by the Spirit has become a sort of "catch all" expression that more often than not is used to justify one's personal desire or belief. Many are often heard saying concerning matters in their life by qualifying it by saying the "Spirit led me to do this". But in spite of the confusion, the Bible does have quite a bit to say on the subject.

We first want to establish the fact that the scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit leads the Christian. In Romans 8:14 we read, *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"*

In addition consider Galatians 5:16-18 which states,

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law."

There are many other passages that could be considered but these should suffice to establish the extreme importance of being led by the Spirit. This importance is clearly seen in two points that these passages raise. The first is that the children of God are those who are led by the Spirit. If we turn this around it would be true that those who are not led by the Spirit are not the children of God! Consequently, being led by the Spirit is directly related to our position in Christ.

The second point is that if we are led by the Spirit we are not under law. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the full meaning and benefit of not being under the law

it is expedient that we briefly address this significant point.

Basically there are two ways that man can be justified. One is by perfect obedience to the law of God. God has placed within the hearts of all men His moral law and later His written law to the House of Israel. The Bible is teaching that man cannot be justified by either. This was the argumentation supplied by Paul that led to the conclusion that, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). Paul also referred to the law as the ministry of death written and engraved on stone (2 Cor. 3:7). By this he is indicating that man cannot be saved by perfect obedience to God's law. In Romans 3:20 Paul concludes, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

Since the law cannot justify man then how are we justified? We are justified by the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. (Rom. 3:22). Our salvation is through God's grace demonstrated in the sacrifice of His Son for our sins and our acceptance of His Son by our faith in Him. Consequently, this is manifest in our lives through being led by the Spirit as Paul indicates in his epistle to the Galatians.

Now that we have established that being led by the Spirit is equivalent to being justified in Christ we can discuss how the Spirit leads us.

In answer to the question of "how the Spirit leads?" we answer that He leads the Christian both externally and internally. Now we will discuss both briefly in that which follows.

The Spirit leads the Christian externally through the Word of God. The Word is the instrument that the Spirit uses to instruct and convict the hearts of men. Read the teaching of Jesus on this subject in John 16:7-11, 12-13 and Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 2:9-13 and Ephesians 3:3-5, 6:17.

Jesus told His apostles that after He went away He would send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would convict the world of sin. He would also guide the apostles into all truth. The Spirit of God knows the mind of God and thus revealed it to the apostles who in turn wrote the scriptures. Thus the scriptures are inspired and are able to make us complete. (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

They also function as the sword of the Spirit used to prick the hearts of men.

The agency that the Spirit uses to lead us is His word. Therefore to be led by the Spirit is to listen to and obey the word given by the Spirit. When one sets their mind on the Spirit they will live in accordance to what He teaches!

It is strange that so many people who talk of being concerned about God's leading and will for their life fail to open up the Bible and study it! The Spirit of God will not mislead us through the word but if we rely on feelings or words of men Satan can easily mislead us. So we ask, do you desire to be led by the Spirit? Then learn what the Spirit has said through the scriptures.

The Holy Spirit also leads us internally through His indwelling. The Bible teaches us that we who are baptized into Christ receive the indwelling of His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in us strengthening the inner man. Notice this truth in the following passages.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3:20)

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Phi.2:12-13)

Both of these passages teach that God works in us through the power of His Spirit. His Spirit is present to help us with our weaknesses. In our own power we are nothing but with the help of God we are more than conquerors. Note Romans 8:26-28,

"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searches the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them

that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

From the above we find that being led by the Spirit occurs as He guides us through His revealed Word and as He supplies us strength as He indwells in our bodies. He functions then both as a guide to direct us as we live in this world and as a helper to strengthen us in our weaknesses!

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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 30 – August 5	Van Lear Congregation Van Lear, KY	Emery McCallister, Thad Eubank (Eubank, KY) & Danny Grider (Somerset, KY)
August 3 – 5	New Bethel Congregation Cullman, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 3 – 5	Mount Carmel Road Congregation Gay, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
August 3 – 5	Rainsville Congregation Rainsville, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
August 5 – 12	Dowell Hill Church Columbus, Indiana	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
August 10 – 12	Valley Congregation Valley, AL	Allen Daniel (Woodland, AL)
August 13 – 17	Chestnut Grove Congregation Parksville, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
August 17 – 19	West Broad Street Congregation Wedowee, AL	Don Avaritt (Conway, AR)

August
24 – 26

Church at Willow Creek
Auburn, AL

Sam Dick
(Cave City, KY)

August 25, 2007
All Day

Marriage, Divorce, Remarriage
Discussion
Best Western Smokehouse Lodge
850 West Main St.
Monteagle, TN 37356

Various Speakers

August
26 – 31

Ashlock Congregation
near Celina, TN

Joe Hill
(Hager Hill, KY)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many people were on the roof of the temple when Samson demolished it?
2. According to Psalms 24, what is the Lord's?
3. Whom did Jesus commend for having the greatest faith in Israel?
4. What advice did Paul give to the Roman Christians regarding people who caused divisions among them?
5. According to Revelations, at the pouring out of the sixth bowl, what great river dries up?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .