

A MEDITATION ON PSALM 119 (2)—*J. Slater*

4. Daleth — Verses 25-32

- a. Door, gate — Prov. 8:34; 2 Chr. 29:3

Outside the garden of Eden, tilling the ground ("dust" — v. 25) that is cursed, the saint realizes his true condition (vv. 25, 28, 29). Confession (vv. 25, 26, 29) and faith (vv. 25, 26, 30) are in grace with the Lord's help (vv. 28, 32). I must walk through the door to be taught by Him (v. 26).

Note: First used in Gen. 19:6, 9, 10, where an angel shut the door to keep out the wicked. Last used in Mal. 1:10. Today, the priests expect to be rewarded (paid) to shut the doors to keep out the wicked.

5. He — Verses 33-40

- a. Behold! Lo! — Gen. 47:23 — "Lo! here is seed for you."
- b. The, this, this is it! — Ex. 12:13 — "When I see *the* blood."

In each verse in this section, God is telling the saint, "Behold! it is all *My work* in you; any thought that you can do anything is vanity" (v. 37). Each has a prayer-request for God: to work His purpose, through the Word, but in the Lord's presence (*Thy* Word — v. 38).

6. Vau — Verses 41-48

- a. Hook — holding the Veil — Ex. 26:32
- b. A conjunction: and or also, holding together or joining.

"Thy loving-kindness (v. 41) is the sure mercies of David" (Is. 55:3) — which is the resurrection of Christ (Acts 13:34). This has reached *also* to me. Most verses in this section speak of the saints testimony, which depends on abiding in the Vine: trusting (v. 47), loving (v. 47, 48), keeping (v. 44), meditating (v. 48). The repeated mention of "*Thy*" reveals the presence and work of the Holy Spirit guiding us into all truth. All this hangs upon his "lovingkindnesses" coming *also* unto me.

7. Zain — Verses 49-56

- a. Weapon
- b. To arm oneself — Cf. Gen. 10:8-10 with 2 Cor. 10:4 and Rev. 13:10.

Despite the oppression and discouragement caused by the proud and the wicked, the only weapons of our warfare are "Thy Word" (v. 50) and "Thy Name" (v. 55).

8. Cheth — Verses 57-64

- a. Terror — Gen. 23:3; 27:46
- b. Discouragement — Josh. 1:9; Job 7:14; 2 Ki. 7:6; Jer. 1:17

Notice that, in spite of all the oppression of the bands of the wicked (v. 61), there is not a single word of discouragement, but exactly the opposite. At midnight (v. 62), when things should be darkest, like Paul and Silas, the saint rises up in praise and worship.

9. Teth — Verses 65-72

- a. Serpent (coiled)
- b. Mud, clay

This section seems like the Lord's commentary on Satan's words to Eve. "Hath God said?" Satan only wanted them to know evil (and not good — God). The word "good" is used six times in this section (v. 65 — well, v. 72 — better), proving that through the truth of His Word alone, God alone works only 86 good for His saints and delivers them from the evil one (the proud one who afflicts — v. 69, 71).

10. Yod — verses 73-80

- a. A Hand — Zech. 13:6
- b. To extend the hand — in praise (1 Chr. 16:8, 34) — in confession (Dan. 9:4)
- c. A Monument — 2 Sam. 18:18
- d. Power (of the hand) — Hos. 13:14

In verse 73 we can see the hands of the great, loving, merciful Potter working on His clay. The great work of the Father is in seeking worshippers who will be glad when they see *Me*. Compare vv. 74 and 79 to Luke 2:26, 30 and John 6:37 (I am confident the *Me* in these two verses is Christ).

11. Caph — verses 81-88

- a. Palm of the hand — Lev. 8:27; 14:27, 28
- b. Sole of the foot — Gen. 8:9; Josh. 1:3 (Ps. 145:14; 146:8)

Each of the first seven verses is a beautiful combination of persecution and faith. The key seems to be v. 87: "almost consumed." But the saint always says, "I have not forsaken Thy Word," just as Peter said, "Lord to whom shall we go? Thou hast Words... "

Through all the afflictions of verses 81-87, the saint never loses sight of God's lovingkindness. Though faint and bowed down, he turns in triumphant faith to Him who keeps His promises — this is the victory (1 Jn. 5:4). "My times are in His hands."

To be cont'd

VERILY, VERILY (4)

—*J. van Dijk*

This time we will consider the four occurrences of these words in the sixth chapter of John. This chapter has a different character than the fifth; here the Lord presents Himself as the Son of man rather than as the Son of God. As we will see, this chapter contains more of man's responsibility than of God's sovereignty.

The day after the feeding of the five thousand, the people sought the Lord. When they finally found Him in Capernaum, they asked Him when He had arrived there. Rather than answering their question, the Lord responded by saying, "Verily, verily I say to you, Ye seek Me not because ye have seen signs, but because ye have eaten of the loaves and been filled." Thus the Lord exposed their motives. The Lord's answer seems strange though, after reading that they "followed Him, because they saw the signs which He wrought upon the sick" (6:2). There appears to be a contradiction here between John's narrative and the words spoken by the Lord. I believe that we have an answer to our problem in verse 30, where the people ask, "What sign then doest Thou that we may see *and believe* Thee?" The Lord had presented Himself as the One having been sent by God, a claim that needed substantiating by a sign. But once a sign had been given, (and there had been many), the people should have acknowledged that the Lord was sent by God, accepted His message, and believed that He is God. One cannot accept the messenger and reject the message; even today many seem to overlook this.

That is just what they did (v. 14), they claimed to recognize His being a prophet, perhaps the greatest One, but they rejected His message. They approached this Prophet with the attitude — so prevalent today — of, "What's in it for me?" rather than, "What has He to say to me?" as if God owed them blessings — and as if they were in a suitable condition to receive such blessings. Peter's words, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord" (Lk. 5:8), show how different the reaction of a believing heart is in the presence of undeserved blessing. The Lord said, "Because ye have eaten of the loaves and have been filled." He saw no desire in them to take His words to heart, only eagerness to reap the natural (rather than the spiritual) blessings of His presence.

This was displayed when they asked a little later for a sign "so that they might believe" Him, as if they had not already had enough signs! They simply had no intention of believing. Yet they pretended to be godly people, giving the Lord a Bible verse to back up their request for a sign. In doing so, however, they showed their inability to use Scripture properly. They asked for a sign (vv. 30-31) and, although they did not mention Moses' name, it is evident that they took the "He" in the quoted verse (Ps. 78:24) to refer to Moses. They said, as it were, "Moses gave a sign. If there's any truth in what you say, you'd better give us a sign too." They had been given plenty of signs, but in their self-confidence, they unwittingly displayed their unbelief and selfish desires. Indeed, they resembled many of today's "Christians": "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it" (2 Tim. 3:4-5).

The Lord had to correct them: "Verily, verily, I say to you, [It is] not Moses that has given you the bread out of heaven; but My Father gives you the true Bread out of heaven. For the Bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world" (vv. 32-33). The Lord sought to direct their attention from man to God. These people looked too low — they only saw Moses. But don't we often do the same? Moses beat the rock a second time, yet there have been few men greater than he. We should never forget this! We must at all times go back to the Source behind men of God: God and God's Word (Acts 20:32; Heb. 13:7).

The Lord's reference to the Bread of God which gives life to the world (not merely to Israel) brought about another demonstration of the crowd's greed. Missing the significance of the Lord's words, they immediately asked for the bread the Lord spoke of. If they would have absorbed the true significance of His words, they would have believed on Him and been satisfied, for they would have received the Bread He spoke of at that very moment. They would have had their hunger stilled and their thirst quenched right then and there, as the Lord had said. It was all a matter of faith.

They failed entirely to grasp the Lord's words! They understood neither that the Father, rather than the Lord, was the Giver (the Lord being the Gift), nor that there was no need of receiving this Bread again and again. The Lord had said that the Bread He spoke of *gave* life, not *sustained* life, as normal bread does. Since they did not understand, they asked the Lord to *ever* give them this bread. Once this Bread has been given it gives life to the recipient, for it is the Bread of Life. Once received, the recipient will never hunger: he has eternal life which he will never lose (Jn. 10:28). Neither will one who believes in the Lord Jesus ever thirst, for within him will be "a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life" (Jn. 4:14).

These remarks of the Lord appealed to their responsibility. In the verses that follow (35-46), the Lord again introduced the sovereignty of God: "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will not at all cast out." Murmuring, the Jews questioned the Lord's having been sent from heaven. The Lord told them not to murmur. Then the Lord added a rather unexpected remark: "No one can come to Me except the Father who has sent Me draw him." Debates with (or among) those who do not believe are fruitless; they will come only when God works in their hearts and teaches them. The Lord, immediately after appealing to their responsibility, presented the aspect of God's sovereignty in His dealings with men. These concepts *seem* contradictory to us, but as those taught of God we know that these two sides are entirely compatible. The Lord's remarks to the Jews should have caused them to fall on their faces, plead God's mercy, and request that they too might be brought to the Saviour. They should have realized that they were in need of God's mercy. Man cannot, as they did, deal with the good news of salvation as something that can be debated or perhaps even ignored today and, if one feels like it, accepted tomorrow. Each time God presents this good news to a sinner it is a fresh demonstration of God's mercy, and God is not obliged to present it to anyone a second time. Perhaps we may learn from the Lord that even when an appeal is made to man's responsibility, the aspect of God's sovereignty is not to be overlooked or diminished.

Then the Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believes [on Me] has life eternal. I am the Bread of Life" (v. 47). In the previous chapter we read about faith in the One who sent the Son. Now it is faith in the Son. The Lord presented Himself as the Bread of life, but His hearers would not accept it. Now, in response to the murmuring and arguing of the Jews, the Lord repeats plainly and emphatically that faith in Him gives eternal life. To eat of Him, to completely assimilate Him, puts one beyond the reach of death. The remarks the Lord made in verses 35, 39, 40, 44, 50, and 51 give abundant proof that once someone has genuinely come to the Lord Jesus, he will be secure for eternity. Each of these verses testifies to the impossibility of our losing eternal life once we possess it! No one who has received life from God will ever die spiritually! This certainty rests not in the one who believes, but in the God who saves.

Today we find many who think much of the Man called Jesus. They seek Him as a good Man who lived long ago, One worth speaking about and following, as others who have lived through the ages. This kind of faith — they say they "believe" in Him, but their "faith" doesn't go beyond His historical existence — the Lord had distrusted in John 2:23-25. Such faith does *not* give life. Many who have such faith will later turn their backs on the Lord (v. 66) and die in their sin. For faith to be genuine, it is necessary that the death of the Lord Jesus be realized as an intimate, personal necessity. Those who truly believe in the Lord believe in His Person (who He is), in His words (His message), and in His deeds (His death); they connect all these aspects of His Person intimately with themselves as essential for their own life. We, therefore, should not just eat the Bread, but we must eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Lord Jesus. This means that we identify ourselves entirely with His death (flesh and blood are here separated as they can be only upon death).

Some believe this passage to be a reference to the emblems of the Lord's supper (mass, communion or whatever it is called among Christians). It is true that the emblems of the Lord's supper speak of the Lord's body and blood, and that the Lord used these same symbols here in speaking of our associating with Him in His death. But if two things (here the spiritual eating in John 6 and the practical eating of the Lord's supper) speak of the same reality (our spiritually assimilating the Lord), that does not make these two things one and the same. The Lord's supper is given by Him so that

we might remember Him (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24). Here, however, the Lord spoke symbolically of our assimilating the reality of His death for ourselves. We must eat, making His death our own — He died for *me*, He bore *my* sins upon the cross (1 Pet. 2:24), He was made sin for *me* (2 Cor. 5:21); now Christ is *my* life (Col. 3:4) — it cannot be something outside of ourselves. The Lord's death did not save every man, but only those who acknowledge His death to be a vital matter for themselves. Therefore, the Lord spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Only those who have eaten His flesh and drunk His blood spiritually and (as a result) possess eternal life may give expression to this beautiful fact by remembering the Lord in His death.

The importance of acknowledging that the death of the Lord is essential for receiving eternal life is evident from the Lord's words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Unless ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man, and drunk His blood, ye have no life in yourselves" (v. 53). This settles everything! Unless I am ready to accept the fact that the Lord Jesus had to die for *me*, there is no life in me. Even the best of men are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1). All men must accept the Lord's death as essential for themselves — or reject Him. Those who claim not to have time for this right now are rejecting Him. It is a matter of life and death, to be settled here and now! May none delay settling this important matter.

To be cont'd

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (4)

7. ABRAM'S CALL; MELCHIZEDEK — Genesis 11:26 to 14:24 (see Joshua 24:2, 3).

Outline

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| 1. Abram's ancestry | Gen. 11:26,27 |
| 2. Abram's calling and obedience | Gen. 12:1-8 |
| 3. Famine and journey into Egypt | Gen. 12:9-20 |
| 4. Return from Egypt; Separation from Lot | Gen. 13:1-18 |
| 5. Lot taken captive | Gen. 14:1-12 |
| 6. Lot delivered | Gen. 14:13-17 |
| 7. Melchizedek | Gen. 14:18-24 |

Explanation

1. "Abram" means "High father." "Sarai" means "My princess." "Lot" means "Veil."
2. Abram believed God, followed His call, and left his land and idolatrous kindred (Heb. 11:8). God's threefold promise; (a) a new land, (b) an abundant posterity, and (c) blessing through him for all generations on the earth.
3. A famine brought a new test of faith. Egypt was the breadbasket of the ancient world.
4. Abram had to return to the place where he first had his altar (12:8; 13:3, 4). Lot did not choose his new dwellingplace in the fear of the Lord (Prov. 3:7; Job 28:28).
5. Lot was punished for his ungodly choice by being captured by the gentile kings.
6. Abram was mighty and willing to deliver Lot and recover his family and all his property.
7. Melchizedek, who came to meet Abram, was both priest and king (Heb. 7:1, 2).

Lesson

Chapter 12:1 shows that Abram did not immediately obey God. His relatives caused him to go only part way initially and hindered him from going out of his kindred as Jehovah had told him to do (see Mt. 10:37). Everything God promised to Abram was for the future; Abram dwelled in the land of promise as in a foreign country. He only erected a tent (as pilgrim)

and an altar to worship Jehovah (Heb. 11:9, 10). Spiritual famine in the place where God has placed us is no reason to exchange that place for one where food may be in abundance but where we must give up our God-given position. The woman in Scripture stands for our position. When we sin, God wants us to return to the point of our departure.

Abraham's attitude was one of peace and accommodation towards Lot (Phil. 4:5). Abram received new promises from God and now dwelt alone at Mamre near Hebron before the face of Jehovah (Ps. 91:1). A Christian living in the world is, like Lot, in danger of losing all his spiritual possessions. God allows a spiritual man to help his fallen brother (Gal. 6:1). Melchizedek is a type of Christ in His coming kingdom (Heb. 7:3; Ps.110; Jn.8:58).

Faith cleanses (Acts 15:9). It works through love (behaviour towards Lot — Gal. 5:6). It has the victory over the world (Abram's victory and subsequent behaviour — 1 Jn. 5:4). It keeps the heart from defiling itself with this world (Abram lived as a stranger).

8. HAGAR'S FLIGHT; THE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM; THREE ANGELS APPEAR — Genesis 15:1-6; 16:1-18:15.

Outline

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Abram's faith | Gen. 15:1-6 |
| 2. Hagar's flight; Ishmael's birth | Gen. 16:1-16 |
| 3. God's covenant with Abram | Gen. 17:1-11;15-22 |
| 4. Promise to Sarah | Gen. 18:1-15 |

Explanation

1. Abram believed God (Rom. 4:9-22). Justification by faith (Rom. 3:28).
2. Because God let Abram wait, his faith weakened and he took Hagar as wife. This lack of dependence upon God caused disharmony and sorrow; yet God thinks of Hagar for Abram's sake. Hagar's pronouncement (Gen. 16:13).
3. After this, God strengthened Abram. God changed Abram's name to "Abraham" (Father of a multitude) and Sarai's name to "Sarah" (Princess). Then God made a covenant with him (circumcision being the sign and seal of this). Abraham's intercession for Ishmael and how God answered.
4. The three men were the Lord and two angels.

Lesson

The promise was not to be obtained through human means (Hagar), but by the way of faith. In the way of faith, we wait for the Lord to fulfil His promise. He is mighty — He does that which He promises. In the story of Hagar God shows the truth of Galatians 6:7, 8. (For the significance of Hagar and Sarah, see lesson 10). Today a believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1: 13; 4:30).

Abraham enjoyed the fellowship of the Lord because he, being justified by faith, had peace with God (Rom. 5:1) and lived separated from the world (Jn. 14:23). Sarah had to be brought to faith: she laughed and doubted, but later she believed the promise (Heb. 11:11; Jn. 20:29).

To be cont'd

THE STUDY CORNER (4)

Here once more are a few questions. ~~If you have not sent us your answers before, why not start now? There is still an opportunity to win one of the copies of The Church of the Living God. The deadline for this month's answer is March 31.~~

30. What command did the risen Saviour give His disciples which, if obeyed, might have spread the Assembly over the face of the earth?

31. How did He get His first missionaries started out with the gospel?

32. Quote a verse which definitely tells us that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

33. Is it possible for a believer in the present dispensation to be one of Christ's and not have His Spirit?

34. To whom in heaven does the indwelling Holy Spirit unite the believer and, as thus united, what is the believer said to be?

35. To whom on earth does the indwelling Holy Spirit unite the believer and, as thus united, what are believers said to be?

36. What kind of character should the realization that they are thus united have on the Christians while they are on earth?

37. The Assembly began at Pentecost. When will its time on earth end?

38. How long will the Assembly endure?

39. Christ, the Head in heaven, and His Body, the Assembly on earth, is likened unto the human body. Write out the verse in 1 Corinthians 12 that teaches this.

40. What has God been doing with Jews and Gentiles since Pentecost that He did not do before Pentecost?

~~Perhaps some of you who live far from Canada have found that our deadline is not realistic for your country. If this is the case, write us about it, and perhaps we will extend your deadline so that you can participate. Let me hear from you.~~