

A MEDITATION OF PSALM 119 (4)—*J. Slater*

17. Pe — Verses 129-136

- a. Mouth — Dt. 8:3; Mal. 2:6
- b. Edge of sword — Josh. 6:21; Ps. 149:6; Prov. 5:4

In John 6:51 the Lord says, "If any man eat of this Bread." In verse 131 we have a saint who has had a taste of the Living Bread and desires more. He says, "I opened my mouth wide and panted. If we do this the Lord has promised to fill us. It is remarkable that the word "Thy" occurs ten times in this section. Surely this saint is sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to His Word, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword." Also a solemn note: this same Word will judge those who have heard and rejected it. The oppression of man (vv. 134, 136) will very soon be avenged.

18. Tzade — Verses 137-144

- a. To lie in wait as hunter with fishhook or barbed arrow. — Lam. 3:52 (chased)
- b. Side, beside — Dt. 31:26; Ruth 2:14

This section speaks of conflict and warfare. Though the enemy of our souls hunts after us with cruel hatred (vv. 139, 143), yet One stands beside us to command His faithful Word (v. 138). Twice in this section the certain final victory is hinted at in the thought of "everlasting righteousness" (vv. 142, 144). When the saint finally stands on New Testament ground, the Holy Spirit will give understanding that the battle never was ours, but was won on the cross when the Lord said, "it is finished."

19. Koph — Verses 145-152

- a. Apes — 1 Kings 10:22 They prance aimlessly
- b. A circuit of time — 2 Chr. 24:23

Men whose hearts are set to chase around after the mischievous things of this world are now drawing near to the Assembly (v. 150). Boasting of this world's riches they discourage the saints of God. Let us continually cry with our whole heart to Him who is always near to deliver us from those who are far from the truth.

20. Resh — Verses 153-160

- a. Gall — Ps. 69:21
- b. Poverty — Prov. 24:34
- c. Beginning — Ps. 119:160
- d. Head — Gen. 49:26
- e. Chief — Ps. 137:6

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit (v. 153), who are willing to drink of His cup and suffer affliction with Him, for they can enjoy and see the Kingdom of God *now*.

Transgressors whose life style teaches rebellion against the Lord (vv. 157-158) may seem successful now, but those whose inner spring is the Word alone are grieved knowing their true poverty. Only those who submit to the Word (that is to say, His Lordship) will be able to taste the greatness of His tender mercies.

21. Shin — Verses 161-168

- a. Tooth — Ps. 3:7
- b. Sharp, acute — Ps. 57:4
- c. To change — Mal. 3:6
- d. To sharpen — Dt. 32:41 122

Wealthy persons must not discourage or keep us from remembering that only those with the Word ruling in their hearts possess the true riches and great spoil. What may be written in the margin of a Bible but not in the heart avails little. Only by letting His sharpened Sword search our hearts now, letting Him apply the judgment upon sin at Calvary (v. 164) to our hearts, can we taste and rejoice in the Great Peace.

22. Tau — Verses 169-176

- a. Signature — Job. 31:35
- b. Mark — Ezek. 9:4
- c. To limit, to set bounds — Ps. 78:41 [see footnote in N.Tr.]

What an amazing section this final one is. After 21 chapters, a whole lifetime of counsel, experience, obedience and disobedience, and success and failures, the saint finally achieves a measure of true wisdom. It's not how strong he is, not how mature he is, not what great religious knowledge he has, not how faithful he is that matters, but the learning of one simple lesson "when I am weak then I am powerful." Only when we can acknowledge that our true signature (character, condition, need) still acts like a lost sheep, and we realize how much we need Him, can His power rest upon us. Only then can we rest within the boundless limits of His Love (Jer. 31:3; Rom. 8:39). Surely, as in Ezekiel 34:14-15, the Lord now says, "I will search for My sheep, and... I will Myself feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down." And in John 10:28 He says, "No one shall seize them out of My hand." The real lesson seems to be in simply recognizing where we are: safe in the everlasting arms.

ANSWERS TO A LETTER

4. In Revelation 2:11 and 3:5 we read that unless we live overcoming lives there is every possibility of coming under the power of death. If so, this would mean that our names can be blotted out of the book of the living and it would be very hard to be saved and go to Heaven.

In view of what we have considered so far, it is clear that there is a misunderstanding here. It says that he who overcomes will in no wise be injured of the second death. So we may ask who the overcomer is. Remember that earlier we said that there are many who, although they call themselves Christians, don't have real faith. The Lord in His letters speaks to companies consisting of genuine and non-genuine Christians. Each one who doesn't have real faith in the Lord knows it very well; we may not know it to be true of him, but he himself does, and God does too! These so-called Christians will not be able to overcome, but all true Christians will be overcomers. Is that because they are strong in themselves? Not at all: the Lord keeps them (Jn. 10:27-24). Aware of their own weakness, they ask the Lord's help to be overcomers, and the Lord remains true to His promise to keep His own. So it is not their own capability that causes them to be overcomers, but the Lord's faithfulness towards them. All praise will go to Him.

Now we need to explain the remark (in Rev. 3:5) that the Lord will not blot the name of the overcomer out of the book of life. Doesn't God also say to Moses that He will blot out of His book him who has sinned? (Ex. 32:33). This is true enough: in the end all who have to account for their sins (those who have not believed in the Lord Jesus for salvation — all who have not overcome) will not have their name in the book of life. We are never told that only the names of true believers are written in that book, so nothing said regarding the book is in conflict with God's promises and assurances given us elsewhere in His Word. These words of J.N.D. (Collected Writings, vol. 26, pg. 243) may be helpful: "Where it speaks of blotting out, it is like a registry of votes. If it is proved that a certain name has no right there, it is blotted out. Every professor's name is in the book of life: but if God wrote it, it will never be blotted out. A mere professor writes his name himself, but he has no right to be there, unless God had written his name, and it will be blotted out." This blotting out has been completed in Revelation 20:15, for there we read, "And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire."

5. Do the righteous go to Heaven immediately after death or do they enter some intermediate state or abode until the resurrection?

The following verse gives some help on this question: "And it came to pass that the poor man died, and that he was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham" (Lk. 16:22). With these words, the Lord Jesus informed us that, immediate upon passing out of this life, Lazarus entered a condition of blessing. We must remember, however, that the Lord said this before His death and resurrection.

After Christ's resurrection, Paul wrote, "Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death... But I am pressed by both, having the desire for departure and being with Christ, [for] [it is] very much better, but remaining in the flesh [is] more necessary for your sakes." (Phil. 1:20-25). From this it is first of all clear that by departure Paul meant physical death. Then we also see that Paul expected to be with Christ immediately upon death, a thought, he also

expressed when he wrote that it was better "to be absent from the body and present *with the Lord*" (2 Cor. 5:8). In both cases, he spoke of being with the Lord, rather than of going to Heaven. Isn't it a much nicer expectation to be with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us than to be in Heaven? Not Heaven, but our Lord is the attraction for us: we long to be with Him. And as soon as we depart from here, we *will* be with Him.

Yet, we will not immediately be in our resurrection bodies. Paul wrote that while he longed to be with Christ immediately, he wished even more to be clothed with his house from Heaven (his resurrection body — 2 Cor. 5:2). He thought it better to experience the rapture (the coming of the Lord for those who are His) than to depart through physical death. Of the rapture we read, "We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in [the] twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15: 51-52). "For the Lord Himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in [the] clouds, to meet the Lord in [the] air; and thus we shall be always with [the] Lord" (1 Thess. 4:16-17). These verses tell us that there is a better thing for those who will live when the Lord comes. The dead in Christ will be raised incorruptible, receiving their glorified resurrection-bodies, and those who live will be changed into their new, incorruptible bodies. In summary then, upon dying (God's Word speaks of "falling asleep"), believers will be immediately in Christ's presence, although the full blessing will only be theirs with Christ's coming with resurrection, when they receive their resurrection-bodies. Then they will enter the Father's house and later still enjoy the blessings of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Even so, to be with Christ (the blessing we receive immediately upon death) is better than living here now.

6. *What is the Trinity? How should we understand it? Are we to take part in the Trinity, or in His fullness?*

The difficulty with the expression "the Trinity" is that we do not find it in God's Word. This, however, does not make it an invalid term: it expresses that God is One and yet three Persons. Therefore we have to see if the Bible speaks about God in this manner.

From the start we must realize that we cannot understand God's nature; if we could, we would be equal with God. We are only creatures, and consequently we can only know God to the degree to which He has revealed Himself. The Lord Jesus said that He had come to reveal the Father: he who has seen Him has seen the Father. It is clear from the context that the Lord in saying this refers to God as "the Father." This does not mean that we can understand God, but we may read this and simply believe what we have read, realizing that this is the way in which we may come to know God's nature of Love and Light.

We find the first indication of the Trinity in Genesis 1. God said, "Let us..." Many languages have two forms, a singular and a plural; Hebrew has a form in between these two which signifies two and no more than two. I have been told (I don't know Hebrew) that the word "us" has not the form used for two, but the form used for "at least three." But the verb form is in the singular, which indicates one Person. So in the words "Let us make...", the Hebrew reader is confronted with a word combination that causes him to think of at least three, and yet one.

There are many references to the Lord Jesus which clearly show that He is God. One of the clearest is John 1:1. "... And the Word was with God" (which indicates that He is a separate Person), "and the Word was God" (which establishes that He is God). In John 8 the Lord said, "Unless ye shall believe that I am [He], ye shall die in your sins." There the Lord claims for Himself the name of Jehovah: "I AM." We are told in John 12:41 that the Lord whom Isaiah saw (Isa. 6) was the Lord Jesus. There are many other scriptures which testify of His Deity.

There are also references that speak of the Deity of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:6 it says that God operates all things in all, and verse 11 says, "all these things operates the one and the same Spirit," which shows that a working of the Spirit is referred to as a working of God. We see a similar think when we compare 1 Corinthians 6:11, which says, "Ye have been justified... by the Spirit of our God," with Romans 8:33, which declares, "[It is] God who justifies." These are just two examples. Finally, there is reference to "the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14), another evidence of His being God, since only God is eternal.

God has given the greatest and most precious promises, to those who believe, but these do not include their becoming God. Yet God in His grace has made all who believe in the Lord Jesus partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). They are children of God, having been born of God (Jn. 1:13). We cannot become part of the Trinity, but we are much, much closer to God than we could have ever hoped to be. If God Himself had not said these things, we would not have dared to hope for such a relationship with God, and it amazes us that God went this far. It shows how merciful and gracious God is, how full of love.

Of the Lord Jesus, however, it says that all the fullness of the Godhead is and was pleased to dwell in Him (Col. 2:9; 1:19). This unique expression shows once more that the Lord Jesus is God; these things could never be said of us.

7. In 1 Timothy 6:16, Paul says that no man can see God and live. But in 2 Corinthians 5:8 he says that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Also in 1 John 3:1-3 we read that we shall see Him as He is. Is that only when He appears to us? How should we understand these truths correctly?

It is perhaps easiest to start with the last verse. There you notice how the apostle connects seeing Him with being as He is. This is the key to the answer. If we would remain as we are by nature, sinful men in the flesh, we could never see Him. No man shall see God and live. But now that we have come to know Him, we have become a new creation, all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Peter speaks of this: "[God] has given to us the greatest and precious promises, that through these ye may become partakers of [the] divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:4). So you see, we who believe have changed quite a bit, as we said before: we have been born again! Once we leave our body of humiliation (Phil. 3:21), we will have a body conformed to the glorious body of the Lord; then we will be allowed to see His glory (Jn. 17:24). Then we will see the glory which the Father has given to the Son upon His completion of the work of redemption; then we will in a fuller sense experience the Lord's words to Phillip: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9). We will see God in the Lord Jesus. But while we will be most intimately connected with our Lord, we cannot take part in His essential deity, for that belongs to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit alone. Yet, God has revealed to us His very Being, for we may now know Him both as the Father of our Lord and our Father in the Lord Jesus. Whenever we think of matters such as these, we cannot help but become still, in quiet admiration. Marveling, we may dwell on what God has said in His Word, while thankfulness wells up in our hearts. What a wondrous God we have, what a wondrous Saviour!

8. In Heaven, will men and women retain their respective forms, or will all have the same form, being like God?

This is another subject on which the Lord has not given us much information. We could extend the question and ask whether children will be there as children or in adult form. Since God does not mention these things in His Word, we cannot know the answer. If we realize that God has told us all that we need to know to live in a manner that is pleasing to Him, we may conclude that it is unimportant. Perhaps the question was prompted by a desire to know whether or not there will be a marriage relationship in Heaven. We have some of the Lord's words on this. The Lord said to the Sadducees, "Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels of God in heaven" (Mt. 22:29-30). The Lord's response certainly clears up this point.

As to "the form of God," I would like to refer to John 4:24, where we read that "God is a Spirit." True, we read in Philippians 2:6 that the Lord Jesus subsisted in the form of God, but this does not refer to physical form, but to all that God is in Himself. Moreover, although we have received the divine nature, this does not bring us into the Godhead, nor does it give us the "form of God" in the sense of Philippians 2, for this applies to Christ alone.

9. What happened to our Lord on the cross during the period of the three hours of darkness?

These three hours were the most solemn hours in earth's history. The Creator of Heaven and earth, having become Man, gave Himself into death to save His creation from eternal damnation. John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:15-17, and Hebrews 1:1-3 speak of the Lord Jesus as being God, Creator and Sustainer of all that is created. This is of foremost importance, for when we look at the cross we must fully understand who it is that was hanging there.

Then we must realize that He was God become Man. He was Immanuel (God with us), The One who was conceived of the virgin by the Spirit. Being Man, He could take man's place in judgment; being God, His sacrifice was of infinite value and could satisfy a holy God. Being God, He could return to God the glory of which man had robbed God. No man or angel could ever have done this.

The next important thing to know is that He was sinless. Not only did He never sin, He could not sin, for He was God while He was Man. The temptation in the wilderness proved this, as did His holy life.

When we look at the events surrounding the crucifixion, it appears that man put Him to death. As far as their responsibility is concerned, that is true. Yet we notice in John 19:17 that "He went out, bearing His cross." Since John presents the Lord as the Son of God, the *I AM* (we do not find Him being forsaken in this Gospel), he does not say that the

Lord was *led* away, but that He *went* away. He was in control of everything, even though it appeared that man could do all they wanted to Him.

At last we come to these three terrible hours. The Lord Jesus knew that God had to execute judgment, and He of His own free will took the sins of all who would believe on Him upon Himself. From this moment He "bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24), as if He had committed them; and He "who knew not sin... [was] made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21), as if His nature could have produced sins. Then the Object of God's delight was forsaken by God. God cannot look upon sin or sins, not even when found on the perfect Man, God's own Son. And the judgment came. Now we read very little about what took place in these three hours, but we have the account of Psalm 22, which prophetically gives us a glimpse of what the Lord endured. How could we ever enter into this most solemn event? How could we grasp what depth of anguish the Lord endured and what the manner and greatness was of the payment He made for sin? We learn about it indirectly when we consider these words: God is Holy. We come to see more and more how great the load of our sins was (and we will never know this fully as long as we are in this body). And so we stand at a distance and (with our shoes off our feet) look admiringly at the spectacle: The Creator takes my place and pays for my guilt! What a Saviour! What a God!

The suffering of the Lord during these three hours is not a suffering resulting from what man did to Him. His suffering during that time is by God's hand. Man's sin made it necessary (if man was to be saved). But nothing the soldiers or the Jews did was to be compared with what the Lord suffered in these hours from the hand of God, who righteously demanded the debt to be paid. He "restored that which [He] took not away" (Ps. 69:4).

When these three hours were passed, the Lord did not die of exhaustion — He was the Prince of Life. Knowing that God required the death of the victim, He gave Himself into death; He laid down His life (Jn. 10:17). No one could do so but He who has life in Himself.

10. *Is there a literal hell fire? How can it continue to keep burning eternally?*

This question is difficult to answer. We could perhaps think that the Lord used fire symbolically to describe the awfulness of hell. Now whether it is to be taken figuratively or literally, one thing is certain: the word "fire" best describes the reality of hell. Consequently it makes little difference whether fire is to be taken symbolically or literally; the severity of hell is not one bit less than that of real fire. If it is to be taken symbolically, the reality could only be worse but not less, for the Lord would certainly not have exaggerated. We cannot think of anything worse than an eternity in continual fire.

If it is taken literally, we have to answer the second part of the question: How can it be kept burning eternally? I answer with a question: Is anything too hard for God? Saving even one man *from* hell is greater than keeping fire burning *in* hell.

VERILY, VERILY (6)

— J. van Dijk

In John 10 we find twice the expression "Verily, verily." At first the two statements following these words of the Lord seem confusing. Isn't this often the case? The Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that enters not in by the door to the fold of the sheep, but mounts up elsewhere, *he* is a thief and a robber; but he that enters in by the door is [the] shepherd of the sheep" (vv. 1-2). The Lord implied that He was the One who entered by the door, yet later spoke of Himself as the Door itself (v. 7). If we combine these two sayings, the Lord must have entered by Himself. What does He really mean? The Lord's words are always thought-provoking: one who is not born again can never understand them. Even among those who are, many do not understand them because they do not take time to meditate on what the Lord has said.

The Lord's metaphor uses a simple fact from (first century Palestinian) daily life, yet, its spiritual significance is hard to grasp. We must observe that the Lord's subject was not the sheep, but the fold and it's would be leaders. He answered the unasked question: Who is a legitimate leader of the sheep? In the previous chapter it had become evident that the Pharisees, who were the leaders in Israel, mistreated the sheep. The Lord addressed them when He said that to be a proper shepherd one must enter by the door.

The Pharisees had their "degrees"; they had all "been to seminary." One could not deny that they knew their "Bible," the Law of Moses — at least where it said what — but had no understanding of it. Remember how Nicodemus had to be told that in order to understand one had to be born again. Today too there are plenty of such self-appointed leaders. They have thoughts and reasonings about man's relationship with God, but deny the need for the work of the Lord Jesus on

Calvary. They deny there is only salvation for those who acknowledge that Christ's death was necessary to pay their personal debt. They may say that Christ died for *us*, but they will not and cannot say, "Christ died for me." Yet, many such "leaders" hold positions of prominence in Christian circles.

What is worse, however, is to hear truly born again leaders speak about these men as if they were legitimate leaders of the flock who have something worthwhile to say in areas of doctrine and pastoral care. They accept them because they have degrees; "professional ethics" require them to do this, although new life in Christ is lacking. This blinds the eyes of the sheep. Christians should be as their Lord who, to help the one who had been blind (Jn. 9), unmasked the false leaders.

The two remarks the Lord prefaced with "Verily, verily" are closely connected. In verse 7 the Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the Door of the sheep." The Lord entered by the Door, and He Himself was the Door. But before we seek to understand what it means that the Lord entered by the Door (i.e., by Himself), let us first consider the application to shepherds in the church. They must enter by the Door: Christ. This means they must know who He is. No one can know who Christ is without knowing the value and character of His work: He and His work are inextricably interwoven. Take away from the value of Christ's work and you have blemished His Person; take away from His Person and you have rendered the work He has done of no value. Only He who is God and Man, the Mystery of Godliness (1 Tim. 3:16), in unmarred Perfection could do the great work, a work that rendered glory to God, paying back to God what man had robbed Him of. Who could do this but a Christ who is God Himself? Yet, who should do this but a Christ who is Man? Oh, wonder of God's grace! He and He alone could be, and was, the worthy and necessary sacrifice. And while rendering glory to God, He paid the debt of guilty but repentant sinners. One who would shepherd God's flock must be entirely clear in his thoughts about Him. This aspect of entering in by the Door holds true for shepherds and sheep alike.

There is another aspect to be thought of, however: Christ is the One who gives shepherds to His Church (Eph. 4:11). One must be appointed by the Chief Shepherd to be a shepherd of the flock. Only those sent by Him can be true leaders of the Lord's sheep. In practice, this is much interfered with. Schools are provided to train shepherds (no doubt with good intentions — but with just as little doubt, with so many sad results). Of course, there are many things we can learn from those who are true, God-given shepherds, but many have learned to rely on degrees and diplomas — Christians generally expect their pastors to have one. But are such papers not deceptive if given to one who is not the Lord's or is not sent by Him? These certificates and degrees then become the entrance permit for the thieves and robbers. Those who remark that it is not right to condemn a system because some abuse it should consider this question: What can a degree or certificate give to one who has been instructed and sent by the Lord? The problem is that while schools can teach knowledge, what is needed is a heart prepared by Christ. Unfortunately, a school cannot usually refuse a degree to one who is able to write the exams successfully. Through this man-made system, the emphasis has come to rest on the head rather than the heart. We should ask ourselves: Does God's Word indicate this as the proper way? If not, we should be prepared to change our thinking.

Now let us look at the application of the Lord's words to Himself, for the Lord spoke primarily of Himself. How could He enter by Himself? The Lord knew who He was and He had faithfully proclaimed it; He came in virtue of who He was in Himself. He had a right to the fold of Israel for He was Jehovah (as He had said earlier). He did not hide who He was by pretending to be just another knowledgeable person. No, He came fully claiming His rightful place as the Shepherd of His flock. This relates directly to the Lord's answer in John 8:25: He was "altogether that which I also say to you." I believe this is the Lord's entering in by the Door. He came in the strength of His own Person. The latter is evident from verse 11.

The Lord's statement in verse 7 shows the Shepherd's relationship to the sheep rather than to the flock at large. In the days of the Lord, the sheepfold did not have a closing door. The shepherd placed himself in the opening and so functioned as door: the picture was a very realistic one. Now by saying that He was the Door of the sheep, the Lord indicated that what was true for the shepherds was true for the sheep. There is no legitimate entering unless we come by Christ. One may like Christian morals and choose to follow them punctually, but that does not make one a Christian. One can only become a Christian by fully accepting the Person and the work of Christ as absolutely necessary for one's salvation. Baptism does not even help, since it only increases one's responsibility; God will keep one who is baptized all the more accountable, and that certainly does not make one a true Christian. For that, real confession and repentance are indispensable.

Many other precious truths are connected with these two basic statements, but we will not consider them here. Both shepherds and sheep must have a living relationship with the Lord; the Lord does not speak softly about those who seek to occupy these places without having real life from Him. If this is your condition, may you acknowledge it and confess your sin immediately — before the day of giving account comes.

To be cont'd

TO BE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY (1)

—K. Rouw

Deuteronomy 22:1-12

Care For Each Other.

1. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them back unto thy brother.

2. "And if thy brother be not near unto thee, and thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thy house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it unto him.

3. "And so shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his clothing; and so shalt thou do with everything that is lost of thy brother, which he loseth, and thou findest: thou mayest not hide thyself.

4. "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case [help] him to lift them up."

"Is God occupied about the oxen?" asks the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:9. Actually, it is a rhetorical question meaning, "Corinthians, I hope you realize that God's attention is directed to higher things."

Paul put it as if God would not care for oxen. But did not God bring back the asses for which Saul was looking? Yes, but the deeper sense of the words in 1 Corinthians 9:9 is the primary one, and this the Apostle seeks to convey to us. We often think, "God cares for the oxen, and we may spiritualize this." The Apostle says that this is not the way to look at it; God's care for the oxen and the birds is only a picture, an example to bring the reality to our attention.

God wishes to make His thoughts and plans known to us in His Word, and in the New Testament He tells them to us in verbal, doctrinal form. They are the same truths He showed us in the Old Testament in the form of pictures or types. God speaks about oxen and similar subjects to explain to us the spiritual realities of the New Testament. Otherwise God would not have spoken about (but still have cared for) the oxen. The only reason He speaks about oxen and muzzles in Deuteronomy 25 is to teach us something about the daily bread of labourers.

In a similar vein, we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews and that of Peter something about spiritual sacrifices. But in the various stories of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, God shows us the practical side and the details. There we are taught *how* to sacrifice.

Thus all the scenes in Deuteronomy 22 showing stray asses, birds and their eggs, and tassels contain a series of important principles for us.

The simple things of daily life are full of significance to God. God in His love seeks to teach us to look at all things, even the common, everyday ones, in *His* light. The tenor of our lives is seen in the degree to which we see things in Heaven's light. As a sunset casts a rich glow over everything, so Heaven's light gives value and importance to even the small things in life.

If "thou shalt... see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray...", "but have not love..."

If "thou shalt... see thy brother's ass or his ox fall by the way", "but have not love..."

So, it is possible to live in the land God gave us in His grace, with all its blessings, and yet not have love; to speak with angels' tongues, to have prophecies and knowledge, and no love — the love of Him who seeks what is astray.

Surely, that is the primary thing we are taught here. John can write that brotherly love is not a new commandment; it is a very old one, found in Moses' law: "Thou shalt in any case bring them back unto thy brother." How utterly shameful that God has to give such instructions to His people. It certainly shows us that God knows us through and through. Oh, we are honest finders... as long as we find only one glove! But God also knows the small, Israelitish farmer, among whose few sheep another one suddenly appears, one that he could use for the slaughter. Sometimes it's difficult to be an honest finder!

But "our brother" has something more important than his cattle and his earthly possessions: his heavenly ones. And how many of our brothers have lost this greatest wealth of all; frequently they don't even know what they are missing. To them it is quite enough that they belong to the people of God (and many among them only *hope* to belong). The knowledge that God gives His people a rich inheritance for anyone who wants to take possession of it they have lost altogether. But we are told to bring this wealth (back) to them. There are many who seek for it. Do not many Bible study groups spring up among those who seek for riches they suspect to be there?

In verse 3 we read of a brother who has lost his garment. We will read more about this garment in verses 5, 11, and 12; for now, he has simply lost it. This brother is no longer "dressed" as a Christian; he is no longer recognizable as such. How many brothers are there who don't know (anymore) that they have "put on Christ," who do not know their place as a Christian, and who have been lost in a company where the awareness and knowledge of these things is lost? What a wonderful task is ours if we may, filled with love, return this garment to our brother or sister.

There is something besides this that our brother may lose, something much more serious than straying sheep: straying children! Perhaps they are still living at home, but at the same time they are straying sheep, in danger of losing the way forever. When we see this, what a responsibility we have to do all we can for them: first *pray*, and *afterwards* God may show us something else we can do for them.

But the children of our brother may have actually run away. God knows that we are inclined to withdraw ourselves from such situations (except to gossip about it). It is typical for our times that even the government begins to support the idea that a young runaway should not be brought back to the parents' home, but may legitimately be kept from the parents. This is the character of the last days: rejection of authority. This is what happens when we lose sight of the relationship between (divine) authority and love. True love contains authority. True love leads and acknowledges leadership. The one command in the Garden of Eden was given out of love, and was transgressed by despising that love.

The relationship between the Father in Heaven and the Son upon earth was characterized by love: love that gave commandments, and love which gladly obeyed. Wherever this principle is lacking, all relationship is lost.

But the schools and media frequently teach the opposite — with disastrous results. And what if the results in all their horror show themselves with the sheep or the ass of our brother? How about making a start by praying with this father or mother and trying, together with them, and with Him, to raise up the one who has fallen?

Our help may already begin when we notice that the ox or the ass is in danger of failing, when we see that things are going wrong, (not to get involved in the family or the upbringing of others, but in an effort to prevent a fall). The Lord may work in the heart of the parents to accept this help. Then "know that he that brings back a sinner from [the] error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:20).

Finally, remember that Exodus 23:5 speaks of the ass of our enemy, one who hates us! Just think of leaving our own to go out and help the ass of our enemy! That is something else than helping our brother. "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy," we read in Matthew 5:43. But notice, "it has been said," but not by God! Tradition corrupted the truth.

The lawyer in Luke 10 summarized the second table of the Law quite correctly: "... and thy neighbour as thyself." Many say, "That is the New Testament." No, that is the Old Testament: he quoted Leviticus 19:18.

In the spirit of the New Testament the yardstick is not "as thyself," but Christ. Now we may forgive and help "as the Christ has... you" (Col. 3:13). Praise the Lord, for He is love.

To be cont'd

STUDY CORNER (6)

Let us have another session together. Have you been able to find the answers to the questions in the last issue? ~~Remember that at the end of this year we hope, if the Lord will and we live, to give those with the ten best scores each a copy of The Church of the Living God by R. K. Campbell. Would you like to have a copy of this book? Then send us your answers. Even if you do so this month for the first time, you still have a chance to obtain one of these ten copies. Let us have your answers by May 31.~~

56. To whom did the Apostle Paul address his "First Epistle to the Corinthians"? Be complete.

57. Why did Paul address this Epistle in this manner?
58. Was Paul's teaching at Corinth different than it was in other assemblies?
59. When questions arise today as to order in the Church or the Assembly, where is the safe place to go for instruction?
60. How did Paul get his knowledge of the Assembly?
61. What did Paul mean when he said it was given to him to "fulfil" (or "complete") the Word of God?
62. Did Paul establish one order in one assembly and another order in another assembly?
63. Which two basic principles would be given up if each assembly were considered to be independent from the others?
64. Read 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 and show how these verses teach that each assembly was the local expression of the whole Assembly.
65. How should the things Paul wrote to the Corinthians be received by them and by us?
66. God, by His Holy Spirit, dwells in every believer. Where else (on earth) does He dwell, the very idea of which suggests that it is the dwellingplace of Deity and therefore must be holy?
67. How can the Holy Spirit dwell in individual believers who still have a sinful nature, and how can He dwell among them even though they still sin?
68. Quote a verse in which the Bible tells us that believers are built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.
69. What kind of a house does the Apostle Peter tell us believers are built up into?
70. When the Assembly is spoken of as God's House, what idea is suggested?
71. Who lays down the rules and regulations for the ordering of a house?
72. Paul wanted Timothy to know something which is very important, even for us. He told Timothy he hoped to come unto him shortly, but he was writing so that if he tarried long, Timothy would have this information. What was it?
73. What do you think God would say of Christians who follow their own order, or the order of others, instead of the order God has laid down for His Assembly in His Word?

These are this month's questions. When answering, try to give scripture references wherever possible. For some answers you may not have a verse that speaks directly on the matter; nevertheless, if some verse led you to answer the way you did, then you should quote that verse. I hope many of you will be successful. And now, may the Lord bless you.

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (6)

11. ELIEZER'S COMMISSION; REBECCA'S STORY — Genesis 24

Outline

1. Abraham's instructions Gen. 24:1-9
2. Eliezer's journey Gen. 24:10-14
3. Eliezer meets Rebecca Gen. 24:15-30
4. Eliezer tells his story Gen. 24:31-49
5. Rebecca's decision Gen. 24:50-60

6. Rebecca meets Isaac Gen. 24:61-67

Explanation

1. Isaac's bride could not be a Canaanite.
2. The servant of Abraham acted with submissive confidence in Jehovah as is seen from his prayer at the well.
3. Rebecca's actions were a direct answer to Eliezer's prayer. Their conversation revealed that she was of Abraham's kindred.
4. Eliezer's commission to find a wife for Abraham's son was explained. The family was in agreement, acknowledging the Lord's hand in the events.
5. Rebecca was willing to serve, and made a speedy decision.
6. Isaac was praying while eagerly waiting.

Lesson

God's covenant people, being "called out" and holy, cannot take on an unequal yoke with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14; Gen. 9:25). Eliezer's personal considerations came secondary to fulfilling his master's demands (Eph. 6:5-7).

Rebecca is a type of the Bride of Christ. Her calling and elevation is based on God's purpose and oath concerning Abraham; thus the salvation of the Bride of Christ is founded on God's eternal purpose, His Word, and His oath (Eph. 1:3-4; Rom. 8:29-30; Heb. 6:17-20).

Eliezer, as type of the Holy Spirit, goes to get the bride by testifying of Abraham and of Isaac. Today the Holy Spirit invites sinners to the Saviour (Lk. 14:17). He searches the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11), and testifies and speaks of the Son (Jn. 16:13-15). Rebecca's journey to Canaan to meet Isaac is a picture of the pathway of the Bride through the world, led by the Holy Spirit, to meet the Lord (Rom. 8:14; Phil. 3:20).

While we are on our journey to Heaven, our Bridegroom prays for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:24; 1 Jn. 2:1).

To be cont'd