

Meditation on God's Word

Foundational Truth Volume 1

By Johann Melchizedek Peter

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PREFACE

This book is the first of fourteen books called the 'Foundational Truths Series.' They are designed to bring a Christian through what I would consider basic truths essential to successful Christian living. They can be used as follow up materials to establish the new convert.

In this first book, I have shared the first of what I consider the most important principles of the Christian walk. They are based upon my own personal walk and maturing in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truths unfolded in this book are the landmarks and foundations of my life and ministry.

The principles taught here may be applied practically through confession with the help of the other mini-books, *God's Meditation Food Volume 1 and Volume 2*. I do not believe in being bound or enslaved to a method but anything which gets God's people deeper into the written Word should be welcomed.

Most of all, as you read this book, bear in mind the fact that these are truths that have been proven through blood, sweat and tears. They epitomize a part of my own life. They are not just suggestions. They are my life! I live by them.

May God cause you to hunger after His written Word and may it come alive to you through these pages.

Johann Melchizedek Peter

CHAPTER 1

THE IMPORTANCE OF MEDITATION

Meditation is the most important key in Christian growth. However, when the word ‘meditation’ is mentioned, Christians sometimes have visions of half-naked ‘gurus’ or hermits sitting crossed-legged chanting mantras. Can you imagine King David sitting crossed-legged and chanting? Surely this is not what he meant when he tells us to meditate on the Word of God day and night (Psalms 1:2).

Bible Definition of Meditation

What then exactly is Christian meditation? In normal usage, the word ‘meditation’ speaks of the silent thinking upon an object or thought. From a study of the Bible, we can take note that there is a clear teaching that the act of meditation is not necessarily silent. In the Old Testament, there are several Hebrew words for the word ‘meditate’ but the main word is the word ‘hagah’ which literally means ‘mutter.’

‘Hagah’ has been translated ‘mutter’ twice (Isaiah 59:3; 8:19), ‘meditate’ six times (Joshua 1:8; Psalms 1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 143:5; Isaiah 33:18). It has also been translated ‘speak’ four times (Psalms 35:28; 37:30; 115:7; Proverbs 8:7), ‘study’ twice (Proverbs 15:28; 24:2), ‘talk’ once (Psalms 71:24) and ‘utter’ once (Job 27:4).

It can be noted from these Scriptures that meditation does indicate the use of the mouth as an instrument to mutter or speak God’s Word. Moreover, when we read God’s Word silently, we are only using our eyes to take in God’s Word; but when we read God’s Word aloud, we are using our eyes to read, our mouths to speak and our ears to hear. Three instead of one of our senses are actively taking in God’s Word.

A Vision of My Spirit Man

When I was a young Christian, I used to read the Bible silently. This continued throughout my three years in a Theological Seminary. In the fourth year of the ministry, I had a vision of the condition of my spirit man. I saw my spirit man as skinny as a bamboo stick. There was a horde of demons who surrounded me and I could not successfully walk past them. They blocked my path and I did not have the strength to overcome them in the vision.

Upon coming out of the vision, the Lord began to speak to me about the condition of my spirit man. In all my years of study and accumulation of intellectual knowledge of the Bible, I had not really fed my spirit man. It was undernourished and weak. In desperation I sought after the Lord and asked Him to teach me how to feed my spirit man. It was then that He began to teach me about the truth of meditation.

The Results of Meditation

I sat down and wrote as many promises as I could find from Genesis to Revelation. I personalized the promises and started confessing them for six to seven hours a day. For a whole year, I read no books nor newspapers nor any other materials. I completely soaked myself in the Word of God. Who wouldn't after seeing the destitute condition of their spirit man?

At the end of that year, while I was teaching the Word of God, the gifts of the Spirit started manifesting. The impact and foundation laid during that one year has stayed with me. I could trace the success and breakthrough of the ministry to that one year of solid meditation. Revelations began to flow and I learned more from the Bible than I have ever learned in all my previous years of hard intellectual study.

The Presence of Jesus in the Spirit Man

The main key to success in the Christian life and in the fulltime ministry is meditation on the Word of God. Paul in writing to the Romans said that he served God with his spirit (Romans 1:9). He wrote to them about the mighty signs and wonders which God wrought through him by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:18, 19). God's Spirit worked through Paul's spirit to accomplish the mighty works of God. If Paul's spirit was weak, God's omnipotent and powerful Spirit would have been hindered.

In Ephesians 3:16, Paul prayed for the Ephesians to be strengthened in their inner man. The inner man is obviously the spirit man. The spirit man needs strengthening. The spirit man can be refreshed through Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 16:18; 2 Corinthians 7:13). A strong spirit man will mean a strong channel for God's Spirit. The strength of a chain is the strength of its weakest link. We are all vessels of God. The power and presence of God demonstrated in our midst is dependent not on Him, for He is ever willing to demonstrate His presence and fullness in our midst, but in the ability and strength of our spirits to be channels and instruments of His presence and power.

The grace and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ is within our spirits (Galatians 6:18; 2 Timothy 4:22). A weak spirit would convey a weak presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. A strong and well-nourished spirit man would convey a strong presence and manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing wrong with our Lord Jesus Christ or with the Holy Spirit when a Christian manifests a weak presence of Jesus in his life; but rather there is something wrong or amiss in his spirit man - undernourishment!

Paul's Prayers for the Ephesians

When Paul prayed for the Ephesians, he specifically prayed that God would strengthen their inner man that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). Notice how the strength of our spirits is related to the indwelling presence of Christ in our lives. The conclusion of his prayer for them was that they may be filled with the fullness of God! The strengthening of the spirit man will produce the fullness of God in our lives! (Ephesians 3:19). In case we miss the point of what he was saying, Paul repeated in the next verse that God is able to do everything for us according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20).

The only way by which we can feed and nourish our spirit man is by meditation. The first thing a newborn Christian should do is to learn to meditate on the Word of God to grow. As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. Jesus said that man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). We are not just to read the Word of God. We are to eat the Word of God. Eating and living by the Word of God implies meditating on the Word of God.

Meditating and acting upon the Word guarantees success in the Christian life and in the ministry (Joshua 1:8). Christians need to understand afresh the truth of meditation. Just because the devil stole a principle and twisted it to evil does not mean that there is no genuine principle. The counterfeit is an imitation of the true one. Meditation started in the Word of God and the principle has been twisted and used to open doors for the devil to control and possess people's lives.

We are exhorted to meditate day and night (Psalms 1:2). We are to talk of God's Word when we sit down, when we walk, when we lie down and when we rise up (Deuteronomy 6:7). The Israelites were told to bind them to their hands and have them as frontlets before their eyes - a symbol of taking and acting God's Word out in their daily lives, and a symbol of visualizing the Word every day (Deuteronomy 6:8). God's Word makes it clear that meditation on the Word is an everyday affair.

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE WORD

Meditation is not a short cut to growth. It is a steady and sure way of growing spiritually. You may not notice your growth day by day but in the long run you will notice a marked change and difference in your life and ministry. If a small boy wants to grow a beard, he can strain and groan all he wants to but he will not produce a whisker or a goatee. All the boy has to do is to eat properly and in time he will naturally grow a nice looking goatee if he so desires.

In the same manner, sometimes Christians strain and struggle to produce certain spiritual results in their lives but all to no avail. If they would only patiently feed their spirits, the production of spiritual results would come automatically as a side effect. No man struggles to produce a beard, it grows naturally. No man can produce spiritual results by carnal methods; they come naturally (supernaturally) as a result of the growth of the spirit man.

Two Aspects of Meditation

The first part of meditation is the confession of God's Word. The second is the contemplation of God's Word. Within the first part of meditation are two sub-parts: the confession of God's Word to get it into our spirits and the speaking of God's Word from our spirits as a decree or command over circumstances. Both are the speaking of God's Word but the effect is different. The speaking of God's Word is first to implant the Word into the fertile ground of our spirits. Later the implanted Word takes root and takes dominion through our lives over the circumstances around us.

Implanting the Word

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). When the Word of God is spoken, whether by others or by ourselves, it will produce faith in the hearts of those who hear it. We can read God's Word aloud to ourselves. It is even more powerful and effective when we personalize the Word of God. One of the most basic necessities of the Christian life is to know what the Word of God says concerning us.

There are nearly one hundred and fifty Scriptures in the Bible which tell us who we are in Christ. There are thousands of Scripture promises for health, healing, prosperity, wisdom, holiness and for every other need we have in spirit, soul or body. The tragedy of it all is that many Christians do not know the promises of God freely given to them through their inheritance in Christ.

We partake of the divine nature through the exceedingly great promises of God (2 Peter 1:4). Some Christians think that the promises of God may not be for them but Paul said expressly that all the promises of God are ‘Yea’ and ‘Amen’ in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20). To the question as to whether all the promises of God in the Bible apply to us, God has replied with a resounding ‘Yes’ in Christ. If God did not spare His Son but sent Him to die for our salvation, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? The secret of the overcoming Christian life is in learning how to actualize the promises into our lives.

Muttering and meditating upon the Word of God, until it becomes alive in our spirits, is the key to actualizing the promises of God. Muttering (Hebrew ‘hagah’ means mutter) upon the Word of God day and night is likened to a tree planted by the rivers of water absorbing and drawing water into its system through its roots (Psalms 1:3).

Four Steps in Meditation

There are four steps to falling into sin. First the thought brought by the temptation, secondly the picture wrought by the imagination, thirdly the desire for the temptation and finally the act of sin itself. Each of these steps leads one into another. If we spend time meditating over an offer from satan, it will lead to wild imaginations after some time. The wild imaginations will then lead to a compulsive desire for it. This is then easily followed by yielding to the lust and acting upon it.

It is easier to overcome a temptation at the first and second stages. When the temptation has been meditated upon until it becomes a burning desire in a person’s life, he may need the influence and fellowship of Christians to help him overcome the desire for the temptation.

Similarly, these four steps apply to the positive as with the negative side. Many Christians read the Word and know what they ought to do. Hearing more sermons in Christian meetings lead to even more knowledge as to what they ought to do. The problem becomes compounded when Christians know what they ought to do but have no desire to do it. It is difficult to do what one has no desire to do. How do we get the desire to do what we ought to do? By meditation, of course!

The daily meditation and confession of God’s Word produce good thoughts in our minds. Through time, these thoughts become pictures or visions in our imagination. The constant imaging of biblical pictures and visions in our imagination will produce a desire to fulfil them. The acting out becomes easy because of strong desire. Nobody has a problem doing what they desire.

The little booklet 'God's Meditation Food' which I wrote, was a small extract from my meditation file to give Christians a ready tool to personalize some of the promises of God into their lives. It contains personalized Scriptures on our position in Christ (all one hundred and fifty of them), Scriptures on health, healing, prosperity, thought life, holiness, love and Scriptural prayers.

Decreeing God's Word

Once the Word of God is implanted into our spirits, our confession of the Word takes on a new dimension. It is no longer confessing God's Word into us but it is confessing God's Word against the mountains or circumstances in our lives. Jesus spoke to storms and they were calmed. He spoke to sicknesses and they fled. His spoken Word was with great authority. At this point, our spoken words begin to take on a greater authority and power when we speak them.

In Mark 11:23-24, Jesus said that we can speak to mountains and they shall be removed if we do not doubt. If our hearts are filled with the Word, we will not doubt. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. If our hearts have been implanted by the Word of God, our hearts would be filled with faith and not doubt.

The reason Christians claim this promise and speak to the mountains and it does not work for them is because they doubt in their hearts. They doubt in their hearts because the Word did not take root in their spirits. They only have mental assent. If they would only take time to meditate and allow the Word to take root in their spirits, speaking to the mountains would have been easy.

We cannot bypass step one, confessing God's Word into our spirits, and jump to step two, decreeing God's Word from our spirits. Jesus said that the words which He spoke were spirit and life (John 6:63). Jesus was the Word made flesh (John 1:14). The Word of God is health and life to our flesh (Proverbs 4:20-22). The Word of God is full of life and affects our thoughts and even pierces into our bones and marrow (Hebrews 4:12).

There is neither mountain nor any problem that can stand against our spoken word once our spirits are filled and saturated with the Word of God. The power of decree is a promise given to all Christians. We can have what we say and we will only say what is in line with the Word because we are filled with the Word. Jesus said that we can have what we say (Mark 11:23). No matter what traditional 'churchianity' says, confession is still possession because Jesus said so!

CHAPTER 3

THE ART OF CONTEMPLATION

Confession is loud but contemplation is silent. Contemplation is a lost art in modern Christianity. The writings of earlier Christians like Savonarola and Madam Guyon show forth the fact that these are saints who have learned the art of contemplation. The writings of Sadhu Sundar Singh also reveal the same depth of contemplation.

Degrees of Mental Strength

The minds of many people have been so perverted and weakened by temptation that they can hardly concentrate for long on a holy thought. Their minds are easily distracted and holy thoughts so fleeting as to be negligible. Such Christians also usually live unsuccessful lives both in the kingdom of God and in the world at large. There is no possibility of having a holy life until we have a holy thought life.

Just as people have differing amounts of physical strength; people also have differing amounts of mental strength. However, those with small sized and weak bodies may develop them by spending time in physical exercise. In like manner, those who are mentally weak can develop mental strength by the exercise of contemplation.

To be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6). The act of being spiritually minded - the minding of spiritual things - is the act of contemplation. Contemplation involves the concentration of our thoughts on the Word of God. The end result is the renewal of the mind.

The Four Steps in Contemplation

The Old Testament saints who walked by faith exercised all these four steps. They received the promises by seeing them, being assured of them, embracing them and confessing them (Hebrews 11:13). The first step involves visualizing, the second involves the assurance of faith, the third the outflow of emotions and the fourth confession. You can see how these steps are all related to meditation on the Word of God.

The first step involves the imagination. When we read God's Word it must not only be sounds to our ears, we must also allow the Holy Spirit to take the Word of God and create pictures in our imagination. In other words, we must not only read God's Word with our intellect but with our imagination.

A study of the Greek words for 'mind' in the New Testament will reveal the different aspects and workings of the mind of our soul.

The Two Aspects of the Mind

The two main Greek words translated 'mind' are the words 'dialogismos' and 'dianoia.' 'Dialogismos' refers to the intellect or reasoning part of our mind. It is the part that helps us to be logical and analytical. This word has been translated as 'reasoning' in various passages (Luke 9:47; Acts 18:4, 19; 2 Corinthians 10:5). The other word 'dianoia' has been translated 'imagination' and 'mind' and is the more common word used in the New Testament (Luke 1:51; 10:27; Heb 8:10; 10:16). This word has been used in relationship to the heart (Luke 1:51; Hebrews 8:10). I believe that 'dianoia' has a direct relationship with the imagination part of our mind for Paul speaks of the eyes of our 'dianoia' (Ephesians 1:18 'understanding' - 'dianoia').

The equivalent word for 'imagination' in the Hebrew Old Testament is the word 'yetzer' which carries the same meaning. It has been translated 'imagination' several times (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Deuteronomy 31:21; 1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:18). The Bible shows very clearly that God is concerned about our imagination. The renewal of the mind must include the renewal of the imagination.

The Importance of Visualizing

When Eve saw the fruit of the tree of knowledge, she desired it (Genesis 3:6). When Lot saw the natural goodness of the land by the valley, he made the wrong choice (Genesis 13:10). When Achan saw the Babylonian garment together with silver and gold, he coveted and took them (Joshua 7:21). When King David saw Bathsheba, he lusted for her and committed adultery followed by murder (2 Samuel 11:2). Wrong imaginations have caused the downfall of many.

However on the positive side, when Abraham saw the dust by day and the stars by night as his descendants, faith began to arise in his heart to actualize the promises of God (Genesis 13:14-16; 15:5-6). Two people can face the same set of circumstances but if the imagination of each is different, they will have differing results. The ten spies saw themselves as grasshoppers and ended up dying in the wilderness, whereas Joshua and Caleb saw that they were well able to overcome the giants and they entered and possessed the promised land (Numbers 13:28, 30, 33).

The difference between successfully walking on water and drowning lies in the thoughts and imaginations. Peter started walking on water based upon the spoken Word of Jesus but when he saw the waves, he was afraid and

began to sink (Matthew 14:28-30). It was not what took place outwardly that determined the miracle of walking on water but it was what took place inwardly - the thoughts and imaginations!

The Method of Contemplation

When we read the Bible, we should ask the Holy Spirit to help us picture the passages which we are reading. For example, if we are reading the account of Jesus walking on the water in Matthew chapter fourteen, we should close our eyes for a moment and see, in the eyes of our imagination, Jesus walking on water. We should hear the waters gushing, the wind howling and see the pitch of night in the early hours of the morning.

Our imagination should then catch the disciples rowing the boat, panting and gasping away, with great effort against the strong contrary winds. Then we hear the scream of the disciples as they notice a distant figure drawing near them on the surface of the sea. At first there was a scream, then there was a pandemonium of panicky screams as someone suggested that it was a ghost. It must have been the strong waves and turbulent sea that kept them from abandoning ship.

It was then that they heard the voice of their Master calling, "Fear not! It is I!" For a moment there was dead silence. Then the gruff voice of Peter pierced the stillness of the disciples saying, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come on the water to you."

The above is a short example of how the imagination can make a few verses of the Bible come alive. We should not only read the Bible but we should read the Bible with our imagination. At first we find it difficult to picture anything because our imagination needs training and development. However, gradually the mind will be strengthened and we can visualize Scriptures that are more difficult to picture like the epistles. Through time and training, our ability to mind spiritual things increases and we begin to reap the benefits of a peaceful and holy mind.

Just as an athlete would train a little every day to develop physical strength and stature, we should take time every day to train our minds in the contemplation of God's Word. From five minutes we can increase to fifteen minutes, half and hour and then one hour.

Therefore, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue, if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate and think on these things (Philippians 4:8).

The Assurance of the Promises

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is the evidence and assurance we experience in our spirits when the promises of God are implanted into our spirits. This assurance takes place only when the process of meditation and visualizing have impregnated our spirits. Without this process of implanting the Word into our spirits, we would merely have information and knowledge about the promises which would only be mental assent.

Abraham received the promise of God regarding an heir when he was about seventy-five years old but when God spoke to him about a child in his ninety-ninth year, Abraham laughed in unbelief (Genesis 12:4; 15:4; 17:17). He believed that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5-6). At ninety-nine, he thought that Ishmael would be the key to that fulfilment (Genesis 17:18).

Abraham had assurance for the promise concerning his descendants but he had not yet received assurance for a son through Sarah. In spite of his initial reaction of unbelief, Abraham became fully convinced - fully assured - that God was able to perform what He had spoken. His assurance came despite the impossible circumstances that faced him in the deadness of Sarah's womb and in his own sterile body (Romans 4:19). It was in such circumstances that God asked Abraham and Sarah to change their names.

From that moment onwards, Abraham did not waver at the promise of God. He was strengthened in faith and gave glory to God (Romans 4:20). Since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God, Abraham was strengthened in faith by considering and meditating upon God's promise to him. Giving glory to God speaks of thanksgiving to God. Meditation upon God's Word produces assurance.

Embracing the Promises

Embracing the promises of God involves experiencing all the feelings involved in the fulfilment of the promises of God. To see implies distance, to be assured implies confidence, to embrace implies closeness. By this stage whatever has been visualized and contemplated upon begins to produce the good feelings involved. Being assured speaks of the confidence received without feelings. Faith does not follow feelings but feelings are to follow faith.

For example, if you are an athlete and you are lying sick in a hospital bed. Visualizing the promises of God for healing, you should see yourself running again. You are confessing the healing Scriptures to yourself. You see yourself in a race. The crowds are cheering. You are in full health

running steadily to the lead. The joy of victory fills you. Your family congratulates you. The joy of what you visualize so captivates you that you forget that you are still in a hospital bed. You start rejoicing in what you visualize and then suddenly you realize that you are still in bed. By then the assurance of healing and health has been built stronger into your spirit.

In the first step of seeing the promise, you hold the vision but now in the third step of contemplation, the vision holds you. It moves you. It motivates you. It touches you. The reality of the vision far surpasses the reality of the things around you. This is what is meant by embracing the promises. You experience the vision emotionally.

Confessing the Promises

By the time your visualization and contemplation has reached step three, embracing the promises, the fourth step of confession is easy. Many people find this fourth step difficult because they have not gone through the first three steps. Confessing the promises involves calling those things which be not as though they were. It is the same principle as decreeing the promises covered earlier.

When we have spoken to the mountain to be removed, we are to believe that we have received (Mark 11:23-24). Abraham called himself a father of many nations before he and Sarah received Isaac. To the world, he would be telling a lie because they can't see it yet but in God, he was telling the truth because God had said it. He believed God rather than circumstances.

It is important to differentiate confession of things to come as though they were and denying the existence of things as they are. Abraham was not denying the existence of the impossibility in his circumstances but he was denying the right of those circumstances to continue to exist. The cult of Christian Science denies the existence of natural circumstances claiming that it is all a mental mirage. Faith confession, however, understands that natural circumstances are real but they can be changed and moulded by believing and confessing. This principle did not start with the faith movement but it started in Jesus' ministry.

Jesus showed the power of words over circumstances and exhorted His disciples over and over again to believe and exercise the same dominion.

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and shall not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says (Mark 11:23).

If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you (Matthew 17:20).

If you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain,’ Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done (Matthew 21:21).

Jesus leaves us no room to doubt that if we have faith, our words will carry the power to change our circumstances. We can have what we confess.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF WORDS

Spoken words play an important role in the Christian life. If a person claims to be religious or spiritual but does not know how to control their tongue, their spirituality is false (James 1:26). There are two Greek words translated as 'word' in the New Testament. The first is 'logos' which means 'the living word' - the source of all ideas, words and creation (the life principle). The second is 'rhema' which means 'the spoken word.'

Understanding 'logos' and 'rhema'

'Logos,' for the understanding of the Christian, can be taken as all the total Wisdom of God inclusive of that which He has revealed to man in the written Word, the Bible. Therefore, the written Word can be taken as a compilation of His revealed 'logos' to man.

'Rhema' has always meant 'the spoken word' and for our study we will take it as meaning this. Many Christians have a vague idea of the difference and relationship between the two words 'logos' and 'rhema.' Some Christian books and teaching have separated the identity of the 'logos' and 'rhema' that Christians don't realize the relationship and link between both.

'Rhema' is a part of 'logos' revealed and manifested to a specific person for a specific purpose and a specific time. It applies directly to the person who receives the 'rhema' and indirectly as an example and teaching to others. The Bible contains 'logos' but at one time all the 'logos' in the Bible was 'rhema' to the people in the Bible. The 'rhema' comes from the 'logos' and a compilation of all the 'rhema' is the 'logos.'

One way we can illustrate this is by the analogy of the human body. The whole human body represents the 'logos' and the individual cells represent the 'rhema.' Each of the individual and microscopic cells has a specific function in a specific position and they live for a specific time. The whole body actually consists billions of cells.

Sometimes in the Bible, the words 'logos' and 'rhema' have been used interchangeably. In the book of Acts in chapter ten, Luke the author recorded that while Peter was speaking these 'rhema,' the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the 'logos.' Both these words were translated 'words' in the English Bible. The two words 'logos' and 'rhema' have been used to refer to the same sermon which Peter preached.

All Promises in God's Word are 'Rhema'

There are miracles in the Bible like parting the Red Sea, stopping the sun and moon and walking on water which are records of how men of God heard a 'rhema' for themselves and wrought such great miracles. Those miracles are not 'rhema' to us. Therefore, if anyone wants to do such miracles, they need to hear a 'rhema' for themselves.

However, there are some promises in the Bible that are clear-cut 'rhema' to all who read the Bible. Scriptures like 'whoever believes in Him,' 'if anyone is sick,' or 'he who believes in Me' are all 'rhema' to as many as come across those Scriptures (John 3:16; James 5:14; John 14:12). We do not need to ask God whether it is His Will for us to be saved. His Word tells us clearly His Will (1 Timothy 2:4).

Some Christians equate walking on water with healing. They say that just as we need to hear from God before we can walk on water, we need to hear from God before we can be healed. They do not realize that walking on water is not a promise but healing is a promise! The two Scriptures do not stand in the same category. Scriptures that are not classified as promises are records of the possibility of God working a miracle in a certain area but to do them we still need to hear a fresh 'rhema' and command from God.

On the other hand, Scriptures that are classified as promises, some conditional and some unconditional, are dependent on the conditions specified for each promise to be fulfilled. Those who say that claiming healing by faith through God's Word is Christian humanism, advocate claiming salvation by faith through God's promises in the Scriptures. To be consistent with their unsound theology, they might as well classify claiming salvation in Christ based on the Scriptures as Christian humanism because it is twisting God's arm to save us from our sins based on what He promised in His Word.

The problem is not in whether healing is God's 'rhema' to us but rather in the art of meditation on God's Word until the assurance or faith has dropped into our hearts. Many Christians act on God's Word claiming healing by faith in the Word without any assurance in their hearts. They do it not because faith has risen in their hearts but because they have seen others do it. God's Word is merely information to their minds but not revelation to their hearts yet.

A Definition of Confession

The word ‘confession’ comes from the Greek word ‘homologos’ which literally means ‘the same as logos.’ Therefore, confession is to say the same thing as the ‘logos’ or God’s Word says about ourselves or our circumstances. I call this ‘Word confession.’ The operation of this principle is the operation of the same spirit of faith. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I believed and therefore I spoke,” we also believe and therefore speak (2 Corinthians 4:13).

When the Israelite spies came back from the promise land, ten of them spoke words of defeat and discouragement. The Bible tells us that they gave a bad report (Numbers 13:32). What they said was not in line with what God said and promised. Only Joshua and Caleb said they were able to overcome. It was also only Joshua and Caleb who entered the promise land.

Before David ever threw a single stone at Goliath, he boldly said that he would give the flesh of Goliath and all the Philistines to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel (1 Samuel 17:46). He released a Word confession before he released a stone from his sling.

The confession of our mouth works for or against us, positive or negative. When Jacob unknowingly said that whoever has Laban’s false gods should not live, Rachel, who had taken the idols, subsequently died (Genesis 31:32; 35:16-19). Jesus said that we will be judged by every word that we speak (Matthew 12:36-37). Death and life are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21). The tongue has the power to control and rule the whole course of nature (James 3:4-6).

James, in his writings in chapter three of his epistle, compared the tongue to the bit in a horse’s mouth and the rudder of a ship. In modern analogy, the tongue would be equivalent to the steering wheel of a car. It is the steering wheel of a car that determines where the direction is. No matter how powerful the car is, the steering wheel still controls the direction of all its power. In like manner, the words we speak will control the course and direction of our whole life. We should be careful what we say and only say what is in line with the Word of God.

The Importance of Tongue Control

In almost all his epistles, which give explicit instructions on the conduct of Christian life, Paul emphasized the control and restraint of the tongue.

In Romans, Paul exhorted to stay away from and note those who cause division through their words (Romans 16:17, 18).

In First Corinthians, he exhorted the speaking of things that bring edification (1 Corinthians 14:26).

In Second Corinthians, he said that his written words were not for destruction but for edification (2 Corinthians 13:10).

In Galatians, he told the church not to bite and devour one another (Galatians 5:15).

In Ephesians, he told us to let no corrupt word proceed out of our mouth but only that which is good for edification (Ephesians 4:29).

In Philippians he told us to meditate on things which have virtue (Philippians 4:8).

In Colossians, he told us to do everything in word or deed in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father (Colossians 3:17).

In Thessalonians, he told us not to be busybodies (2 Thessalonians 3:11).

In First Timothy, he told us to be an example to believers in word (1 Timothy 4:12).

Paul told us not to consent to those who do not have wholesome words in line with the words of our Lord Jesus. He told us to avoid profane and idle babble (1 Timothy 6:3, 20).

In Second Timothy, he told us that a servant of God must be gentle and not be quarrelsome (2 Timothy 2:24).

In Titus, he told us to have sound speech that cannot be condemned and to avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions and strivings which are unprofitable and useless (Titus 2:8; 3:9).

In Hebrews, he told us that Jesus is the High Priest of our Confession and therefore to hold fast to our confession (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14; 10:21-23).

Anyone who reads the epistles without seeing that the Christian life involves the control of the tongue needs their eyes to be examined. The Word of God leaves us no room to doubt that it is a part and parcel of the normal Christian life to speak the right words that are in line with the Word of God.

Grieving the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, as a person, is sensitive to the words that we speak. Notice how verse thirty in Ephesians chapter four is sandwiched between two verses which has reference to the tongue. Verses twenty-five, twenty-nine and thirty-one of the same chapter emphasize the control of the tongue. From this context, we can conclude that the grieving of the Holy Spirit has to do as much with our words as with our actions.

Sometimes when a wrong word or conversation was indulged in by people in my presence, I have felt a grieving in the Spirit. I did not realize it then, but subsequently in learning to walk closely with the person of the Holy

Spirit, I have found Him to be sensitive to a lot of things which we human beings are dull to.

We can also see that when the Holy Spirit takes control of a person, one of the first things that happens is that the person speaks forth in a new tongue. Since the tongue, according to the epistle of James, is the control centre of our being, it would only be natural that the Holy Spirit would seek the control of our tongue when He fills us. The filling of the Holy Spirit will result in the control of our tongues to utter forth psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:18-19). The saturation of the Word of God in our lives will also result in the same control (Colossians 3:16).

The Faith Confession

One of the obvious manifestations that we believe that God has heard our prayers is the way we converse about those things we have prayed about. Hearing the way some Christians talk about the things they prayed about sometimes gives us the picture that they do not believe that God has heard them. Their prayers seem to be just a religious exercise. God is real! He is a Rewarder of those who seek Him diligently (Hebrews 11:6).

Some people find it difficult to confess what God's Word says about their situation because they have not really believed in their heart. They need to take God's Word until faith rises in their heart and then make the confession of faith. David could speak boldly against Goliath because he really believed that God would help him defeat Goliath. The faith confession is to believe in the heart first and then confess with the mouth.

The problem why some confessions do not materialize is because while the mouth confessions are being made, the heart is in doubt. Please note that Mark chapter eleven verse twenty-four is dependent on the quality of the heart not to doubt. You can have what you say if it is in line with the written Word and if you do not doubt.

CHAPTER 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE THOUGHT LIFE

Many Christians are concerned about changing the outward life - their habits and behaviour - without first changing their thought life. There can be no holy actions without a holy thought life. If Christians will change their thought life, they will be able to change their conduct. A lot of preaching demands a change of the outward life like quitting smoking and drinking, etc. Christians who hear such preaching struggle to quit and do not succeed because they did not change inwardly first.

Jesus and the Thought Life

The revolution that Jesus brought forth to mankind was the replacing of the Old Covenant with the New. The Old Covenant concerns itself with the outward life. Paul made it very clear in the book of Romans that the struggle to conform to the righteous commandments of the law was not outward inability but inward inability.

Paul spoke about the willingness and desire of the spirit man to follow after the law (Romans 7:22). However, he saw another law of sin warring against his mind (Romans 7:23). The warfare is in the mind! Later on in the same book, he mentioned the importance of minding the right things (Romans 8:5-6). In Corinthians, he clearly stated that we are to bring every thought to the captivity of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Jesus emphasized in His teaching that it was not just the action that is important but the thoughts we think and harbour which are of prime importance. If a man looks at a woman with a lustful thought, Jesus considered it committing adultery in the heart (Matthew 5:28). He said that it was the thoughts of the heart that defiled a man (Matthew 15:19, 20). Jesus pointed out that doubts in the heart, which are actually thoughts contrary to the Word of God, would render faith that moves mountains inoperative (Mark 11:23; Matthew 21:21).

Jesus also clearly pointed out that the reason why Peter failed to successfully walk on the water was because of his doubts (Matthew 14:31). Jesus demanded of Jairus that he be not afraid when bad news was given to him (Mark 5:36). To be afraid is to be filled with fearful thoughts. To believe and not doubt is to be filled with faith-filled thoughts. Jesus leaves us no doubt to the fact that what goes on in the thought life is of great importance to the successful receiving and performing of miracles.

The Relationship of the Mind to the Spirit World

The realm of thoughts is also the realm where satan places his temptations before us. Bad thoughts, evil thoughts, fearful thoughts and lustful thoughts all have their origins in him. He builds strongholds over people's lives by feeding them the wrong thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:5). The downfall of Adam and Eve started with their listening to the words and thoughts of satan. By giving contrary thoughts to the Word of God, he produces doubt and unbelief.

Have you ever stopped to realize that satan is a fallen spirit being and not a natural flesh and blood being? If so, did you realize that a spirit being is having an effect on the thought realm? There is a direct relationship between the thought realm and the spirit realm. The human mind is a spiritual sensor and receiver of the things in the spirit world.

Of course, in its fallen state as it is, the human mind is not a perfect instrument to sense the spirit realm. However, we continue to see a definite link between the spirit world and the mind. When God created Adam and Eve, the mind of man was a perfect vehicle to relate to the spirit realm. Ever since Adam fell into sin, darkness has reigned in the minds of man. Paul wrote that the minds of man, alienated from the life of God, have their understanding darkened (Ephesians 4:17, 18).

The Purpose of the Mind

The thoughts that we receive come from three realms. They can come from the physical realm, from the mental realm (where we think our own thoughts), or from the spiritual realm. If we could isolate the thoughts from the physical and mental realm from the thoughts of the spiritual realm, we would be more spiritually sensitized. And if we could further dissect the thoughts of the Holy Spirit placed into our minds through our spirit from the thoughts of satan, we would be God-sensitized.

The sinister reason why satan seems to try to block our thought life with temptations is that he wants to prevent us from discerning the thoughts from the Holy Spirit. It is similar to radio operators trying to jam a transmission by transmitting on the same wave length. The static produced is such that we either completely cannot hear the broadcast we want or there is too much electrical noises and static that the transmission we want to hear is hardly audible. Once Christians realize the purpose of the mind as a receiving station for thoughts from the Holy Spirit, we will never again entertain bad thoughts which block our receiving channel.

This is not to say that God transmits directly into our minds but rather God transmits to our spirits. Spirit communicates to spirit. However, what the Holy Spirit transmits to our human spirits will rise up as inner thoughts in our minds if our minds are renewed and tuned to our human spirits.

The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Why should we discern the thoughts that are in our mind? The purpose is to discern between those thoughts that are from God and those that aren't. The instrument for doing that is the Word of God.

Jesus told His disciples that the Word has made them clean (John 15:3). He told them in the preceding verse that those who bear fruit must be pruned that they may bear more fruit (John 15:2). It is interesting to note that the words 'clean' and 'pruned' come from the same Greek word. Jesus was actually pointing out that the pruning process is done by the Word. The Word cleanses our thoughts and the intents of our heart. The perfection of the church of Jesus Christ has also been compared to Jesus cleansing His bride with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

The Benefits of a Sound Mind

Jesus Christ demands not only the sanctification of our bodies but also the sanctification of our minds. Part of the process of the sanctification of the mind begins when we begin to take God's Word and contemplate upon it every day. We need to revive the early Christian teachings on contemplation to make stronger Christians. When we have a firm grasp of the truths which Christians have unfolded centuries earlier, combined with the truths of the present Pentecostal revival, we will have a revival powerful in its outward and inward forms.

A sound mind reaps the benefits of life and peace (Romans 8:6). Paul's exhortation in Romans chapter eight was that Christians would mind the things of the Spirit so much that they could be led by the Holy Spirit. Note the words 'therefore' which he used in conclusion to his exposition on the benefits of being spiritually minded in verse twelve. He connected spiritual-mindedness to being led by the Holy Spirit without the spirit of fear (Romans 8:14).

Moreover, one of the strongest senses of the inner witness is the peace of God. The Amplified Bible states emphatically to let the peace of God act as an umpire continually in our hearts (Colossians 3:15). The Holy Spirit leads and umpires us by the peace of God in our hearts. We cannot have this peace without minding the things of the Spirit (Romans 8:6). Furthermore, Paul in speaking about the 'umpiring effect' of peace in our hearts also in

the very next verse tells us to let the Word of Christ dwell richly (abundantly) in our hearts (Colossians 3:16). The contemplation of God's Word will bring us to a greater sensitivity to be led by the Holy Spirit.

The two principle keys of confession and contemplation must be mastered by any Christian who sincerely wants a closer walk with God. These principles are essential to the whole Christian life including the life of a minister. Neglecting these principles will lead to shallowness in the Christian life. Do not procrastinate. Start now to master these two principles. God is not far from us. He is there all the time waiting for us to learn to draw into His presence.

“For this commandment which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?’ Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say, ‘Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?’ But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.” (Deuteronomy 30:12-16)

CHAPTER 6

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH BEHOLDING CHRIST

It is a true fact acknowledged by all Christians that we cannot save ourselves but we need Christ to save us. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The essence of true Christianity is dependence on Christ and all that He has done for us on the cross (Romans 5:8). We are justified by faith in Christ and were baptized into His death and raised with Him by the glory of the Father to be seated in heavenly places with Him (Romans 5:1; 6:3-5; Ephesians 2:4-7). The problem in true Christianity is not belief in salvation through the atonement of Christ but rather how to continue the life of Christ after we have received salvation.

It is in this area that most Christianity resort back to works to become a better Christian or to continue to grow in Christ after we have received salvation through grace. There are sufficient Scriptures that expound the need to be diligent and holy such that Christians are confused between 'works to become' and 'works from become.' Most Christians fall back after salvation into works to become more holy, more like Christ, more devout, etc. The mystery to become more like Christ is thus left like an art piece painted by masters which very few can reach or like an unreachable goal that is only partially realized by the end of the earthly life.

Two Kinds of Works

Before salvation, we can see clearly that there are two kinds of works: the works of the law in trying to achieve salvation and acceptance before God versus the works of grace which are based on faith. Paul debated these points very clearly in the book of Romans. In Romans chapter four, he showed that Abraham was justified not by works but by faith (Romans 4:2). He illustrated with others like David who had righteousness imputed to them when they would otherwise have perished by the law (Romans 4:5, 6). He concluded in speaking of the same imputing of the righteousness of God to us who believe in God who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4:24-25).

In Romans chapter five, he labored the point that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). He spoke of the free gift of righteousness which is obtained through faith (Romans 5:15-21). In Romans chapter six, he spoke of us being united with Christ in His death and resurrection and our old man was crucified with Him that we should no longer be slaves of sin but of righteousness in Christ (Romans 6:5-6, 18). In

Romans chapter seven, he illustrated the law as the old husband who died and grace as the new husband we marry (which is Christ) and we are forever freed from the bondages and demands of sin to walk in newness of life (Romans 7:1-3, 6). His conclusion was that the law was good but that it was powerless through the weakness of the flesh and sin being present in the flesh (Romans 7: 12, 18). The only thing the law succeeded in was to make sin appear more sinful (Romans 7:13). There is no escaping the theological conclusion of the apostle Paul that works of the law cannot succeed in bringing us any closer to God and we need the infusion of God's life to make us all that God wants us to be (Romans 6:23; 8:2).

The works of grace differ from the works of the law primarily through the infusion of Christ's life into us enabling us to do the works of God. The source of the energy for the works come from Christ; are performed through Him and end in Him receiving all the glory. What is born of the Spirit is spirit and what is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6). The failure of the law was that it could not be fulfilled due to the weakness of the flesh (Romans 8:3). This problem is solved via the infusion of Christ's life into us through His indwelling presence by the Spirit of the Lord (Romans 8:8-11). The new life in Christ is to be lived through the power of the indwelling Christ (Galatians 2:20).

Impartation of Christ's Life and Presence

It makes the Christian life seem so simple, just let Christ live through us. The problem is that impartations come by measures and we need more levels of impartation to do higher level works of God. Our output performance is directly proportional to the input of God's life into us. In fact, input is always greater than output. If this balance is not maintained, we will end up serving God in the flesh again and the Bible has already concluded that the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8). Transformation is by impartations and not by works. We receive an impartation, are transformed accordingly, then we perform. Being is greater than doing. Abiding is greater than fruiting. For one is the cause and the other is the effect; the cause is always greater than the effect. Fruit bearing is by abiding in Christ and not by performance (John 15:4-5).

In Ephesians chapter three, Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians to be strengthened in their spirits so that Christ could dwell in them (Ephesians 3:16-17). The Ephesian Christians have already accepted Christ and were born again. They have been baptized in water and in the Spirit and brought up under Paul's daily teaching ministry for the first three years (Acts 19:1-6; 20:31). Yet here they are after years of solid Christianity needing more impartations to know more of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 3:19). Indeed, all of Christian life is growth through impartations, and each impartation is dependent on the preceding one being absorbed transforming

the recipient into the image of Christ. From glory to glory we are being transformed, day by day through our spirits growing and receiving more and more of the life and presence of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16). The Christian walk began when the light of the life of Christ shone in our hearts, and continues all the rest of our Christian life by allowing more and more of that powerful life and light of Christ to shine upon us (John 1:4; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:6).

The Importance of Feeding the Spirit Man

Everything we do from the moment we are born again depends on our spirit man, which is freshly born again (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:2). The strength of our spirit man is the key to everything in Christian life right up to the time we meet Jesus face to face. The presence of Christ with us is through our spirit man (2 Timothy 4:22). Even the apostle Paul himself declared that all his years of serving God in the ministry was through his spirit man (Romans 1:9). When we face obstacles or difficulties in our Christian walk, it is not because we need to try harder but rather we need to transform more by receiving more grace and impartation. Outward difficulties become a walk in the park when the inward man becomes stronger than the external circumstances. When we reached the end of our strength it is only an indication that we need to receive more impartation of His grace and life (Hebrews 4:15-16). It is definitely not an indication that we should double our efforts; rather it is an indication that we must surrender more to God to receive double the impartation.

This is the true secret of Christianity, that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. And the secret key is to nurture and grow our spirit man. The simplest method of feeding our spirit man is through meditation on God's Word. No longer do we just feed our physical man but we now must daily feed our spirit man (Matthew 4:4). Everything of Christian victorious living and powerful ministry in the Lord depends on the growth and development of our spirit man. Christ in us is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). As each believer grows their spirit man to maturity, the church as a whole will lay hold and receive all that is the width, length, and depth and height of God – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge and the whole church of Christ be filled with the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:17-19).