

# Christian Meditation

*“My meditation of  
him shall be sweet:  
I will be glad in  
the LORD.”  
—Psalm 104:34*

**THERE CAN BE NOTHING** more soul-satisfying to Christians than to realize that their chief delight is in calling to their own mind, and

to the attention of others, the goodness of the Lord; and in being assured that his lovingkindness is still over all their ways. Throughout the psalm from which our text is taken, David recounts many evidences of the Lord's love and power in caring for his earthly creation. Then he assures us that the “glory of the LORD shall endure for ever.” (vs. 31) David, with his poetical mind, was fond of entering into these reveries of thought concerning the goodness of God, and in giving glory to him for all the blessings of life.

David's meditations were not of the idle, unprofitable kind. As he thought upon the Lord he drew practical lessons from the evidences of divine love that came to his mind. He notes, for example, that the “high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies [small rabbit-like animals].”

(vs. 18) While the psalmist rejoices in the fact that some consideration is given for the wild goats and the conies, he is reminded that a still more wonderful provision is made for himself, and for all who intelligently and whole-heartedly give their devotion to the Creator.

In Psalm 121:1,2 we read, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” This passage as it stands is more or less contradictory, in that it first of all suggests that our help comes from the hills, and then states that it comes from the Lord. It has been suggested that the first verse should really be stated in the question form, and thus it is rendered by numerous translations. One example is the *New Living Translation*, which reads: “I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there?” The answer then is, “My help comes from the LORD!” This arrangement seems to be more in keeping with what the beloved David had in mind. The literal hills and rocks have been a refuge for the “wild goats” and “conies.” The symbolic hills and rocky places—the various kingdoms of the earth, large and small—may be considered a place of safety by those who are not the Lord’s true sheep. However, says the psalmist, “My help comes from the LORD.”

In this we have revealed a closeness of fellowship and trust which is possible only to those who have truly come to know the Heavenly Father. Many are able to trust in God and to rejoice in his care over them, so long as they can see some visible manifestation of his lovingkindness. However, those who have great faith are able to reach out

beyond the material evidences of divine love, and to rejoice in the Lord himself. David had come to know that while all the earthly wonders with which he was surrounded gave evidence of the handiwork of divine power, yet he had also learned that back of all created things was the Creator. It is of his glorious Creator that David declares in our opening text, "My meditation of him shall be sweet."

## **HOW WE KNOW GOD**

To really know God so fully that our "meditation of him shall be sweet," is one of the superlative attainments of the Christian life. How do we attain such an intimate, soul-satisfying knowledge of the Creator? What is it that we must learn about God in order to have the very thought of him bring delight to our hearts? A very informative statement on this point is given us by the Heavenly Father, who says, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD."—Jer. 9:23,24

Billions of earth's inhabitants have professed to believe in God, but few indeed have learned to know him as one who takes delight in exercising "lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth." How does the follower of Christ learn to know God after this manner? David learned much about God by studying his marvelous creative works. The Christian likewise can find much in the

book of nature that tells of his lovingkindness: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge."—Ps. 19:1,2

David, however, was not satisfied merely with the revelation of God which came to him through the study of the natural realm. There was a still deeper knowledge which concerned the psalmist. After eloquently portraying the glory of the Creator as seen in his creative works, David continues, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them is great reward."—vss. 7-11

The "law of the LORD;" the "testimony of the LORD;" the "commandment of the LORD;" and the "statutes of the LORD" were to David what God's plan is to the Christian at the present time. In these David found revealed the divine will for him, and to the extent then due, the plan of God for the blessing of the people in general. By the full surrender of himself to God, thus coming wholly under the influence of his law, his testimony, his statutes, and his commandments, David came face to face with the Heavenly Father in a manner which his study of nature had neither approximated nor comprehended.

## WISDOM FROM ABOVE

David found that the written Word of God was capable of “making wise the simple.” At one time he might have been one of those described in the passage quoted from Jeremiah’s prophecy whose wisdom was foolishness in God’s sight—a wisdom in which there was no cause for rejoicing. Now, however, he was truly wise. The “wisdom from above” had come into his heart, being conveyed there by the law, statutes, testimony, and commandments of the Lord.—James 3:17

This heavenly wisdom, the possession of which truly makes wise, is a wisdom that is based on the great fact of knowing God. Just as David found that the full depth of such a knowledge was obtainable only through God’s revealed will to him, so Christians also will find that God is now revealing himself to them through the Truth of his divine plan and purpose. A moment’s reflection will show why this is so. It is true that Christians and others also are able to some extent to visualize God’s love and glory and power by looking up into the heavens at night and by studying the works of nature that are about us on every hand. Yet this vision of creative glory is offset to a large extent by the apparent miscarriage of divine love that is everywhere in evidence about us.

We can see God’s glory in the stars, but what is there in a deathbed scene, with all its attendant suffering and heartaches, to call forth praise to the Creator? Degradation, misery, and poverty stalk up and down in the earth. Disease and death are gradually taking possession of our bodies. These facts would tend to drive us away from the very thought of God were it not for his written Word, in which he reveals his

plans and purposes. Thus it is only through such an understanding that we can truly know God.

God's plan reveals his wisdom in the permission of evil. It shows his love—transcending, self-sacrificing love—in the gift of his beloved Son as the Redeemer, thus making possible mankind's ultimate deliverance from sin and death. (John 3:16,17) It reveals divine power as from age to age we note the unalterable, onward march of his purposes which ultimately will accomplish the deliverance of a lost race, during the "times of restitution" soon to come. —Acts 3:20,21

When we know the truths contained in God's Word, we see his majesty everywhere in evidence. If we did not know these things, the statement that God takes delight to "exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth," if fully analyzed, would seem like a hollow mockery. The understanding of God's Word of Truth changes our entire vision of the Heavenly Father, and through it we are able to see and know him as he really is. Because of this, our meditations of him are truly sweet and inspiring, as the words of the hymn express:

"The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord  
Through all the realms of boundless space.  
The soaring mind may roam abroad,  
And there Thy power and wisdom trace.

But not alone do worlds of light,  
And earth display Thy grand designs;  
'Tis when our eyes behold Thy Word  
We read Thy name in fairest lines."

*Hymns of Dawn* #283, "The Glory of the Lord"

## WISDOM FROM ABOVE

When we speak of the "Truth" we mean more than a mere theoretic knowledge of certain features of God's plan. Our knowledge, of course, begins with a mental grasp of the various doctrines of the divine arrangement, and this forms a basis of our knowledge of God. However, unless we go beyond a mere mental appreciation of these teachings, we will never truly know God, and we will never reach that point in spiritual development in which we will find sweetness in our meditations of him.

The primary purpose of the doctrines of God's plan is that in and through them the Christian may learn what the divine will concerning him is. It is a doctrine of Truth that if we expect to live with Christ in the future, we must now be dead with him. (II Tim. 2:11) This fact is valueless in our lives, however, unless we see to it that we are dead with Christ. (Rom. 6:8; Col. 3:3) To be dead with Christ means the full surrender of our wills to God. It is only as we actually yield our all to him, accepting his will as our daily rule in life, that we are in a position to learn of him. Furthermore, it is when we begin to experience the proof of his promises and purposes in our lives, through our obedience to the Truth, that we begin to know him with an understanding obtainable only by such experience.

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him," is another fundamental of God's plan. (II Tim. 2:12) With this great fact before his mind the Christian is able to interpret sufferings in the light of divine love. Hence each hardship of the way will be a stepping-stone to higher attainments in the knowledge of God. When the trials come it will be remembered

that Jesus learned what it is to be obedient in suffering. (Heb. 5:8) We can rejoice that the Heavenly Father is dealing with the Christian in the same way he dealt with his well-beloved and only begotten Son. The followers of Christ will remember also, that “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth [Greek: train or educate].” (Heb. 12:6) Such experiences are not necessarily in the nature of punishments for wrongdoing, but intended as training for future glory with Jesus in the Messianic kingdom. Knowing this, the Christian will see, even in suffering, further evidence of the love of God. Thus daily, by experience based upon a knowledge of the Truth, the child of God learns to know him more and more intimately.

Divine promises of “grace to help in time of need” are also found to be verified in the lives of those wholly devoted to the doing of the will of God. (Heb. 4:16) Thus we learn to trust him fully, even where we cannot trace him. When unexpected experiences loom up before us, we remember the promise that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Rom. 8:28) Hence, we accept these new circumstances as a part of his will for us; and we find, sooner or later, that each new scene he sends us, as the words of the hymn express, comes as a “sweet and glad surprise.” It may be neither glad nor sweet so far as the flesh is concerned. Indeed, it may be the very opposite. The Christian realizes, through the understanding of the Word of Truth, that the flesh is on the altar of sacrifice; and therefore knows better than to expect that the fire necessary to consume the sacrifice will be pleasant.

## EXULTANT VICTORY

Thus it is that many of the experiences the Lord in his divine providence permits to come to us are hard to bear, seeming at times almost to crush us. Yet, if we know the Truth, and his promises are verified in us because we have fully accepted them by faith, then our determination will be to continue to yield joyfully to him. With the prophet we will exclaim with confidence, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him!" (Job 13:15) Indeed, we will more than merely trust him. We will rejoice in him, because in his daily dealing with us we will be learning to read the marvelous letters of his love.

Though all our friends may turn against us because of the Truth; though ridicule and persecutions may arise; though the day may be dark and the night long; if God's Word means as much to us as it is capable of meaning, the Heavenly Father will become to us an ever-increasing source of joy and delight. Even if our experiences are such as to portend the actual death of the flesh, we will rejoice in the thought as expressed by the poet when he wrote, "The worst they can do beloved is to change your cross for a crown." Then we will thank God for the experiences his love sends to us which assure us of the final gaining of the "crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

It is not alone in the clouds that the Heavenly Father reveals himself to his children. Those whose desires are fully surrendered to the will of God will find that in the outworking of the divine arrangements for them there are many exceedingly pleasant experiences to be enjoyed. Jesus promised to give his joy to his followers, and his true followers have had that joy.—John 15:11; 16:24; I John 1:3,4

Jesus' joy and delight consisted of doing his Father's will. (Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:7-9) It was a joy to him to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to proclaim the Father's love. Through all of these experiences Jesus saw the benevolent hand of the Almighty. By faith he could look down the corridor of the ages and see all the sick restored to health, all the dead raised to life, all the hungry fed. Thus the "joy that was set before him" in his Father's plan enabled him to interpret even his sufferings in the light of God's love, resulting in a continuous, abounding joy. (Heb. 12:2) It was because God was with him in all of his experiences that Jesus' joy was made full.

Thus it will be with faithful Christians. Not only will they accept their trials as of divine appointment, but will rejoice in every part of the divine will for them. They will rejoice in the promises of future glory. They will be glad for the sweet experiences of telling others of divine love. They will rejoice always!—Phil. 4:4

Their fellowship with the brethren will still further enhance their appreciation of God. In short, they will seek more and more to interpret every experience of life in the light of divine love. Thus God will be their daily meditation, and in the very presence of God will they continue to walk in the narrow way.

David did not understand the Truth as Christ's followers of today are privileged to know it, yet he had tasted the sweetness of at least a limited knowledge of his Creator. How much more then, should we, to whom God has revealed the length and breadth and height and depth of his love, rejoice in the God of our salvation! (Eph. 3:17-19; Mic. 7:7) May it be our blessed portion to be able through faith to turn our every experience in the direction of a better knowledge of God. ■