**MEDITATION: WITH JESUS ONLY**

**Christian Meditation? by Gerard Feller**

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Many people today feel chronically rushed by the high-tech world we live in, with its constant changes. Many also are slaves to pleasure and possessions; they strive for recognition and power and are self-centered at heart. Such relational dysfunctions, in turn, lead to erosion of respect for anything or anyone at all. The materialistic world view leads to fear. Fear of the enemy, war, loss, illness, death, and especially inner emptiness and silence. We see a mass-flight toward the pseudo-peace of New Age thinking and other forms of spirituality. Christians, too, often have difficulty experiencing rest and peace in their lives. Many are trapped in formulaic ideas about prayer and meditation. They are not used to being alone with Jesus. Prayer is hard. It requires an attitude of allowing the Other into the center of your being. You must allow Him to speak and to lead you on a journey through the twists and turns and hidden recesses of your heart and your character. It's amazing how little we know ourselves. How many of us have, in fact, had the courage to take a good look at ourselves? We have to let go of the notion that we understand ourselves; the only one who understands us is the Lord Jesus. He cannot teach us anything until we calm the mental turmoil and are alone with Him.

In this article we will discuss several aspects of meditative prayer and explore spiritual principles for allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us to those sensitive areas we normally prefer to hide. However, is this really the desire of our hearts? Do we truly long for silence, repentance, faith, freedom, security, and trust in Jesus Christ?

Mark 4:33,34 states: "With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was ALONE with his own disciples, he explained everything." (emphasis mine)

**Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)**

Being born again means that the life of the Son of God himself is born and revealed in us. This life is not sustained by food but by prayer. You can feed it or let it go hungry. The primary purpose of prayer is not to receive things; it is to come to know God. We discover that the Holy spirit enables us to pray. We may know what it means to pray in the Spirit, but we are often not aware of the Holy Spirit uttering prayers in us that we cannot express (Rom 8:26,27). He, that is the Spirit in you, prays for the saints according to the will of God. Do not search your heart so much for what you want to pray for; search rather for the prayers of the Holy Spirit (v.27). God's Spirit has need of the believing heart as a temple in which to lift up his intercession.

Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). When Jesus cleansed the temple, he did not allow anyone to carry any object through the temple (Mark 11:16). God's Spirit will not allow you to use your body in whatever way you see fit. Is it not written: "My house shall be called a HOUSE OF PRAYERfor all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers" (v.17). (emphasis mine)

Do you acknowledge that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? There is only one thing God expects of us, and that is unconditional surrender (1 Cor 6:19). It doesn't matter what we release to him first. When we are born again, God's Spirit begins to work out his new creation in us, and there will come a day when nothing remains of the old self. The old pride will be gone.

How can we live a life that is free from lust, self-interest, irritability, a life that is marked by the kind of love which is not self-seeking, does not think the worst, is always good? We must learn to trust completely in God--not in his blessings, but in Himself. Are you at the point where your faith is not shaken when God withholds his blessings? (2 Cor 5:16.17)

Don't fall apart at the first sting of discomfort. We tend to question God's intentions and wallow in self-pity. "Christian sympathy" will cause us to drift even farther from God's will in these cases. But that's not what God wants: the pierced hand of his Son reaches out to us and says: enter into fellowship with me. "Arise and shine, for your light has come" (Isa 60:1).

**The Holy Spirit and the human spirit**

As we have seen, the the Bible compares the Holy Spirit living in us to a temple (1 Cor 3:16). Paul refers to the temple in the Old Testament when he says that the Holy Spirit lives in us as in a temple. His presence is especially manifest in the Most Holy Place. People observed the rituals of the law in the outer courts and the holy place according to the will of God in the most holy place. A dwelling place should be suited to the One living in it. Only the regenerated spirit--not the mind, emotions, will or body--can be a dwelling place for God (1 Cor 2:13.14). The Spirit simultaneously remodels and inhabits. He cannot dwell where he hasn't remodeled.

The sacred anointing oil, a symbol of the Holy Spirit, was not to be poured over the sacrificial meat. In the same way, the Spirit cannot live in an unregenerated spirit. The only response of the Holy Spirit to the flesh is that He opposes it (Gal 5:17). If a child of God does not understand that the Holy Spirit lives in our hearts (spirit), a place deeper than our mind and emotions, he is in danger of being led by his soul (psyche) instead of the Holy Spirit. It is tempting to be led by external impulses. The Holy Spirit lives in the deepest recess of our being; his works and his guidance can only come from that place within.

Our prayers are addressed to the Father, who is in heaven, but the Lord Jesus guides us from within (Rom 10:6-8). If our Counselor, Advocate, Mediator lives in our spirit, then his guidance should come from within, as well. We are often misled if we look for dreams, visions, voices, or experiences instead of listening to Him who lives inside of us.

Many christians listen to their soul when they are praying. This can be harmful and has nothing to do with faith. They stop seeing Jesus and focus on themselves. There is, however, a different kind of turning inwards. This is the greatest act of faith. It is a seeking of the Holy Spirit who lives within our spirit. we may not always hear this inner voice, but we can be confident, even in our darkest hours, that He is always there.

No matter how exciting "soulish" (based in the psyche) experiences may be, we should not misinterpret them as spiritual. Only those things which the Holy Spirit brings about in our spirit can be considerd genuine spiritual experiences. Rom 8:16: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (see also 1 Cor 2:10)

**Prayer and silence**

God speaks to us today the same way he speaks with his friend Moses: "Take off your sandals" (your daily walk of life) (Ex 3:5). Take off the habits which enclose your feet, and you will start to see that the place where you are standing is holy ground. You can find the glory of God in all aspects of life, everywhere and always. For many people silence is a threatening thing. They feel like a fish out of water if they do not hear the noise of cars or trains going by, or music playing on the radio. Silence feels alien. Being silent and by yourself is not the same thing as sleeping. Biblical, prayerful meditation is not the same as falling asleep or going into a trance or shutting out reality and escaping into a fantasy world.

Biblical meditation means being spiritually alert and attentive, enabling us to trace carefully the movements of our being. It's not a sleepy, lethargic state of (self) hypnosis, but, on the contrary, a state of heightened awareness and alertness which enables us to be inwardly attentive to our own being. Everyone longs for that inner peace, which involves more than just banning all outside noise and distractions. Quieting external noise makes us aware of a new kind of noise which arises from unprocessed feelings and confused urges. A person who enters a quiet room does not automatically experience inner peace simply because he is there. Matthew 6:6-8 says, "When you pray, go into your room. . . and pray to your Father, who is unseen."

Prayer is an exertion of the will. We must discipline our disordered thoughts and focus on the Lord Jesus. When you pray, do not be verbose. The Lord prayed the same prayer three times in the garden of Gethsemane, using the same words. In the same way, He gave us a prayer which He knew would be repeated throughout the ages. He was not against repetition per se, or against any particular from of prayer.

Prayng often means: "interrupting our personal ambitions." Busy people don't have time to pray. This is detrimental to God's life in us. It's a sad commentary that Jesus CONSTANTLY has to tell us: "Come to me" (Matt 11:28).

The cares of this world, says Jesus, choke off the word of God (Matt 6:26). Take a moment to consider what it is that you do not want to bring to Jesus. If our faith is not entirely genuine, we prefer arguing over coming to him, making excuses over coming to him, drowning in sorrow over coming to him, performing other "spiritual works" over coming to him, indulging our spiritual shamelesness over saying: "Just as I am, Lord, I come to you". The Holy Spirit will put the ax to everything that prevents you inwardly from coming to him.

The Lord Jesus is always ready to receive us with outstretched hands and an invincible, tireless patience: "Come to me, everyone." Prayer doesn't always change the circumstances, but it does change me, and I in turn change things. God has arranged things in such a way that prayer, based on the redemption and resurrection life of Jesus, teaches people to see things differently. Prayer may not always change external things, but it does wonders for the inner man. People who pray have the courage to reach out for God and to be led by Him. "When you were young you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go" (John 21:18).

**Praying with your mind and/or spirit**

We have seen that prayer and meditation require first of all an act of the spirit. "God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). It takes a lot of practice in surrendering and opening up our spirits to receive the things God gives us, which are in turn verbalized and stored by our minds. We might become aware of a certain need; this means we should pray for the matter according to the spiritual knowledge we have received from God. Instead of merely waiting for the movements of the spirit, however, we must also pray with our minds. If the inner man (spirit) is in a state of disorder because of satan or our flesh, we may hardly be able to perceive it. The spirit may have sunk into such a state of torpor that it almost seems unconscious. We feel the presence of the psyche and of physical needs, but the spirit is inactive. In such cases, if we wait for the spirit to move us to pray, it may never happen. That's why we should pray with our minds to the best of our knowledge and ability. In such prayer we resist the powers of darkness. This act of the will also stirs the spirit to into action. "So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind" (1 Cor 14:15".

"Praying with the mind" has the power to mobilize the spirit. Sometimes it seems if at first our prayers consist merely of empty words, but if we persevere and overcome in prayer, our spirit will rise up quickly. Spirit and mind will work together once more. Someone who neglects this spiritual law might wait for God to give him a burden to pray rather than do battle against the enemy, for example. Similarly, if the Holy Spirit has given us a prayer burden in our spirit, our mind needs to remember this and and continue to express it in prayer. We must prayerfully meditate on God's truths. On the other hand, we should not overestimate the function of the mind. Watchman Nee compares the relationship between mind and spirit to a hand-cranked waterpump. In order for the pump to work, you must first pour in some water to create suction. Without the initial influx of water, the pump cannot draw water from the well. In the same way, our spirit is often not activated because we do not pray with our minds first. If we do not add the "water" first, we are like the man who who wants to draw water, but after a while he comes to the conclusion that the well is dry, even though that is not the case.

How manifold are the works of the Holy Spirit! Sometimes it is strong as a lion, sometimes gentle as an infant. The mind can never replace the spirit, but it does help to activate the spirit. A spiritual mind which is obedient to Jesus displays the right balance: thoughtful meditative prayer. If we put too much emphasis on the mind, however, we run the risk of puttting too much pressure on it and rendering it useless for prayer. The enemy of God knows very well that we need our minds to walk in the spirit. He loves for us to overburden our minds so we are not able to receive God's light (Eph 4:18). Endless intellectual analysis and too-intense pondering on the will of God often leads to anxiety.

**Tips for quiet time, mediation with Jesus**

1) Set aside enough time so you don't feel hurried. Writing down your thoughts as they occur

liberates the spirit and opens the way for new thoughts.

2) Start by dedicating the time to Jesus. Invite Him and ask Him to help you with wandering

thoughts.

3) Try to be completely relaxed. Let your soul be receptive to Jesus and his guidance. Don't "try"

to receive guidance, but look at these moments as a time of fellowship with God. Guidance

will

come when you need it. Don't cut this time of silence short.

4) Set aside about a third of the time for reading the Bible.

5) Think about your day and allow Jesus to test your thoughts according to

these 4 rules: a) absolute purity. b) absolute honesty. c) absolute selflesness. d) absolute

love.

6) Things to think about: a) is there anything that hinders your relationship with Jesus? b) Is there

anything you can thank Him for? c) Is there anything or anyone you need to pray for? d) Is

there anyone you need to write, talk to, or invite? e) Is there anything you need to read, or

somewhere you need to go? f) Have you become aware of God's love or his dealings with you

in some way? g) Are there other things you need to do or stop doing?

7) Ask Jesus to guide you the rest of the day in regards to things like communication, planning,

and decisions. Bring special difficulties before Him.

8) God will bless you richly!

**The normal christian life (Watchman Nee)**

Often it is errors of the spirit that are responsible for misguided actions. Whoever has the desire to walk in the spirit must continually be alert and test his own actions. Like the mind, the spirit can be mistaken or prideful, can withdraw or hide. If our spirit does not operate under the authority of the Holy Spirit, it will be reflected in our actions.

If the inner man (a person's spirit) is strong, he is able to control soul and body. If he is weak, however, the soul or the body will control the spirit, leading to much spiritual defeat for the believer. God is interested first and foremost in our spirit. This is the seat of our new life, the place where the Holy Spirit works throught our spirit, where we have fellowship with God, where we discover his will and receive revelations from the Holy Spirit. Moreover, our spirit is the place where we receive instruction, where we mature spiritually, where we resist the attacks of satan, where we receive authority for battle, victory, and strength for ministry. It is the resurrection life in our spirit, finally, which will transform our body into a resurrection body.

**Our spiritual life is always is reflection of the condition of our spirit**

That's why it is so important for our spirit to be in good condition. No matter how sophisticated a person's soul may be, what matters is the condition of the spirit. The Bible has much to say about this. We want to close this article with several characteristics of the spirit to help us understand how we may receive, by grace, the words of the Holy Spirit in our inner being.

**A contrite spirit (repentant, crushed)**

Ps 34:19: The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

Isa 57:15: For this is what the high and lofty One says--He who lives forever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."

Strangely enough, many believers think that a crushed, contrite spirit is only required during times of contrition and repentance or when they have fallen into sin. However, God expects us to have a contrite spirit at all times, because the flesh is always present and ready to become active. A contrite spirit helps us to be on guard and to long for the presence of the Lord. God does not want us to continually be in "penance mode". Rather, He wants us to surrender to him with a contrite spirit, so we are ready at all times to respond to the Holy Spirit who is then able to direct our actions.

The spirit can go astray. Isa 29:24: Those who are wayward in spirit will gain understanding; those who complain will accept instruction." Even if the spirit is not misled, the mind can be so confused that it cannot carry out the the thoughts of the spirit. God saves all who have a crushed spirit. Those who do not he cannot help, because only a crushed spirit is capable of acknowledging the will of God. With such a spirit, sensitive to correction, we will be able to experience daily the salvation of the Lord.

**A broken spirit**

Psalm 51:17: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." A broken spirit trembles before God. There are christians who never feel any inner pressure when they sin. A healthy spirit, like David's, is broken before God when there is sin. It is not hard for God to lift up such a broken spirit.

**A downcast spirit**

Isa 66:2: "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." God smiles on a downcast spirit who is in awe of Him. We must get rid of all false self-confidence and vanity. The believer ought to be filled with a holy awe, and be ready to obey. He does not trust in himself. A lack of awe for God's Spirit is the same as a declaration of independance. A spirit filled with awe for God is a shield against spiritual defeat.

**A lowly, humble spirit**

"Proverbs 16:19: "Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud." Proverbs 29:23: "A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor." Isa 57:15: For this is what the high and lofty One says--I live. . . with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit."

Lowliness means not focusing on yourself. If a believer has a haughty spirit, he is bound to make mistakes. Lowliness focuses on God and other people. In spiritual lowliness, God's presence and glory become manifest. A contrite person is open for instruction from God. Arrogant people always want to teach, but they never learn. Only lowly people are able to bear things and endure them. Even the slightest hardness in us can hinder our fellowship with God.

**Poor in spirit**

Matt 5:3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit". The poor in spirit know they possess nothing. it is dangerous for a believer to think himself spiritually rich. Only the poor in spirit can truly be humble. Spiritual experiences, growth and improvement often become so important to believers that they lose their humility. It can be very dangerous for a believer to sit and think about what he has achieved. Sometimes this happens unconsciously. If we constantly brag about our profound spiritual experiences (under the guise of glorifying God), we turn it into "spiritual merchandise". A poor spirit enables us to lose ourselves in God; a rich spirit is always focused on self. True redemption frees the believer from himself, and unites him with God.

**A gentle spirit**

Gal 6:1: ". . . restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also maybe tempted." Gentleness is an inner characteristic which must be exercised. Someone with a gentle spirit will be able to stop in the midst of fruitful ministry and hear God's voice right away. Phillip, who went from Samaria into the desert, is an example (Acts 8:26). A gentle spirit does not resist the leading hand of God. It is a surrendered, available spirit. It is the spirit of a "lamb", the spirit of "the cross", the spirit who did not hurl insults or threaten when he suffered (1 Pet 2:23). Such a spirit is prepared to suffer, even when he is capable of striking back. Such a spirit draws out the righteousness of others, and is full of love and mercy.

**A spirit of fervor**

Rom 12:11: "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord." The flesh is capable of displaying burning fervor. But, because it is often a merely emotional fervor, it tends to be short-lived. The flesh only does what suits itself and cannot truly serve God. Spiritual fervor is something that lasts. We must allow the Holy Spirit to fill our spirit with a burning fervor. Then our spirit will not freeze up, even when emotions are lacking. If we have a fervent spirit, the work of the Lord will not be neglected. Paul commands us to have a fervent spirit as a matter of the will, and to not be paralyzed by cold, apathetic feelings.

**An even-tempered spirit**

Proverbs 17:27: A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, a man of understanding is even-tempered." Besides a fervent spirit, we also need an even-tempered spirit. Fire must be balanced by "cool" consideration. The peace of Christ is ours if we are completely filled with the Holy Spirit. The peace that passes understanding is like the ocean. Although the waves move to and fro on the surface, in the depths of the sea there is perfect calm. Someone who is not led by his soul but by the Holy Spirit, will be unshakable in difficult circumstances. Our will plays a critical role here. We must have a fervent spirit for the work of the Lord, but also careful consideration as we go about carrying out the work.

**A joyful spirit**

"Luke 1:47: ". . . my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." In regards to himself, a christian should have a broken spirit (Psalm 51:17-19), but in regards to God he ought to rejoice. He does not rejoice about his own experiences or accomplishments, a blessing or a particular circumstance, but in the presence of God himself. Sometimes, when someone is confronted for an extended period of time by worries and difficult circumstances, his human spirit lets go of it its rightful position, and loses its strength and the ability to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The spirit loses its radiance and sometimes the person's spiritual life suffers greatly. Only one thing will help: the joy of the Lord. A child of God should take care never to lose this basic mindset.

**A spirit of power**

2 Tim 1:7: "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline." Timidity should not be confused with humility. Humility means looking away from yourself, forgetting about your weaknesses and your strengths, as well. Timidity has to do with the weakness of the old man. God is not pleased with cowardice and retreat. He wants us to be in awe of Him as we go forth courageously in his strength. He expects us to be fearless witnesses who courageously bear shame and difficulty for his name's sake and who lean on his wisdom, strength, and faithfulness. Towards the enemy we need a spirit of power, towards others a spirit of love, and towards ourselves a sober spirit of self-control.

**The new way of the spirit**

Romans 7:6: "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released form the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit." The old spirit produces and transmits only old thoughts. Such a spirit may generate words, teachings and thoughts, but they are not spiritually alive! Dynamic living is possible only through renewal of the spirit. Without a renewed spirit we cannot speak to the spirit of others. Sometimes you meet christians who do not merely talk about their experiences; you get the feeling that they have just been in the presence of the Lord, and that they could lead you into his presence, as well. They don't give the people stale bread, but fresh manna and fish, prepared in the fire of the Holy Spirit.

**A holy spirit**

1 Cor 7:34: ". . .to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit." 2 Cor 7:1: "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit." Whoever wants to follow Christ must have a holy spirit. An unclean spirit leads to foolishness, wrong thoughts about people or things, criticism, selfishness, jealousy, pride, lovelesness, and many other things that defile the spirit. A child of God must hate sin. "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

**Strong in spirit**

Luke 1:80: "And the child grew and became strong in spirit." Our spirit can grow, and should therefore increase in strength. This is not possible without growth in our spiritual life. Yet we often see that the spirit is not strong enough to control soul and body. This is especially true when the soul is excited or the body is weak. Sometimes when we help others, we find they are so low in spirit that they do not have the strength to free themselves. In times of spiritual battle we also find that we often do not have sufficient strength to gain the victory. But when our inner man becomes stronger, our intuition and discernment also increase in strength. Our spirit must learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to a much greater extent.

Priverbs 18:4: "A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?" We usually think of Moses as a man with a strong spirit. But he had moments of weakness, too, and the Israelites embittered his spirit (Psalm 106:33). Only the Holy Spirit can strengthen our spirits as we practise our spiritual walk.

**One in spirit**

Phill 1:27: "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit." The spiritual life of a believer will be in harmony with the spiritual life of another believer. If God dwells in a person through his Holy Spirit, how can there not be a connection? When our minds and emotions are subject to the spirit, differences in thoughts and feelings will be superceded by the unity of the spirit.

**A gracious spirit**

Gal 6:18: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." The grace of Jesus Christ is precious. The grace of Christ upholds our spirit. This is a blessing which expresses the ultimate achievement of a believing spirit. We must always claim in our spirit this grace of our wonderful Lord.

**In conclusion**

The main point the Bible makes about prayer is this: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of our faith" (Heb 12:2). Our prayers should not be pious verbiage, but prayer according to God's will. Pray in agreement with the things which God revealed in Jesus Christ. The hallmark of out lives is not just going with Jesus to the mountain top to experience wonderful things (Mark 9:2); we have to go back down to the valley where demons dwell (Mark 9:14-29). In 1 Cor 1:27-31 we read: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him. It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: Let him who boasts boast in the Lord

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