

Doctrine of Meditation

1. The greatest saints have learned the art of meditation. In Genesis 24:63 we read that “*Isaac went out to meditate in the field.*” The Psalmist said (119:23) “*Thy servant did meditate on thy statutes.*”
2. One important reason to meditate is to concentrate the mind.
3. Unlike Eastern mysticism, Christian meditation engages the mind upon holy affections. And when the time of meditation takes place, the Christian is to reflect upon specific things.

❖ The Scriptures.

Psalms 1:2 “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

Psalms 119:48 “My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.”

Psalms 119:97 “O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.”

Psalms 119:99 “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.”

Psalms 119:148 “Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.”

Reflection in the Scriptures can lead to personal salvation as the Ethiopian eunuch discovered (Acts 8:26-38), or to sanctification as Augustine realized by reading Romans 13:12-14).

In 387 AD, as Augustine sat in a garden in Milan, he heard a child’s voice singing, “*Take and read, take and read.*” Suddenly compelled to find something to read, he found nearby Paul’s letter to the Romans and read the first words of the text upon which his eyes rested.

“Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” Later he wrote, “*It was as though the light of faith flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.*” An intellectually and morally restless heart came to rest in Christ as Sovereign Lord, Sweet Saviour, and Sanctifier of the Soul.

❖ God Himself

Theologians enjoy ascribing technical words to God and talking about Him as being omnipotent, omniscience, and omnipresent. They like to discuss His communicable and non-communicable attributes and all that is very good and proper. But the most humble Christian can say,

“The thought of God, the thought of Thee,
 Who liest in my heart,
 And yet beyond imagined space
 Outstretched and present art—

The thought of Thee, above, below,
 Around me and within,
 Is more to me than health and wealth,
 Or love of kith and kin.

The thought of God is like the tree
 Beneath whose shade I lie,
 And watch the fleets of snowy clouds
 Sail o’er the silent sky.

‘Tis like that soft invading light,
 Which in all darkness shines,
 The thread that through life’s sombre web
 In golden pattern twines.

It is a thought which ever makes
 Life’s sweetest smiles from tears,
 And is a daybreak to our hopes,
 A sunset to our fears....

Great God, our lowliness takes heart to play
 Beneath the shadow of Thy state;
 The only comfort of our little-ness
 Is that Thou art so great.

Then on Thy grandeur I will lay me down;
 Already life is heaven for me;
 No cradled child more softly lies than I-
 Come soon, Eternity!”

Frederick William Faber
 1814-1863

When the psalmist reflected upon the attributes of God, is it any wonder that he said, “*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.*” (Psalm 63:5)

❖ **Divine Providence**

As the soul considers the majesty of the Almighty so it considers the works He has done.

- Psalms 77:12 “*I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*”
- Psalms 143:5 “*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.*”

Christians never tire of hearing what God has done and is doing on behalf of His people. There is a never ending freshness to the stories associated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Exodus, the life of David, the ministry of Christ, or the Acts of the Apostles. And, we have our own stories to tell how God has provided for all of our needs according to His mercy and grace.

On a personal basis, I have seen God provide for three children, all under the age of ten, wandering the streets of Dallas, Texas day after day. Cast out of the house by 8:00 AM by an abusive alcoholic stepfather, left to play in a local park with only a quarter apiece for food, the children were left to fend for themselves. Hungry they were, poorly clothed a prey to every predator in the area. But the angels came to watch over them and to protect them. And God was good. He became a Father to the abused and a provider of gracious things. I tell you, I have seen the providence of God.

❖ **Bible Doctrine**

In addition to the Scriptures, God, and the works of Divine Providence, the believer would do well to mediate on Bible doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:15 “*Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.*”

As the great doctrines of the Bible are meditated on, the heart learns something about the ruin of man due to total depravity, the redemptive work of Christ at Calvary, and the regeneration of the soul by the secret sovereign work of the Holy Spirit.

4. Because the mind is capable of meditating on good things as well as bad, prayer should be offered that the power to concentrate would be present.

The Psalmist pleaded, Psalms 19:14 “*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*” The meditations of the heart are most acceptable when the Father is adored.

“Almighty One! I bend in dust before Thee;
 Even so veiled cherubs bend;
 In calm and still devotion I adore Thee,
 All-wise, all-present Friend!

Thou to earth its emerald robes hast given,
 Or curtained it in snow;
 And the bright sun, and the soft moon in heaven,
 Before Thy presence bow.

Thou Power sublime! Whose throne is firmly seated
 On stars and glowing suns;
 O, could I praise Thee,- could my soul, elated,
 Waft Thee seraphic tones,-

Had I the lyres of angels,--could I bring Thee
 An offering worthy Thee,-
 In what bright notes of glory would I sing Thee,
 Blest notes of ecstasy!

Eternity! Eternity! How solemn,
 How terrible the sound!
 Here, leaning on thy promises,--a column
 Of strength,- may I be found,
 O, let my heart be ever Thine, while beating,
 As when 'twill cease to beat!

Be Thou my portion, till that awful meeting
 When I my God shall greet!”

Sir John Browning

1792-1872

5. The rewards of taking time to meditate are significant. There will be wisdom of words and understanding of heart.

- *Psalms 49:3 “My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.”*

Following the death of Moses, Joshua was ordained to be the leader of the nation of Israel. But Joshua was not certain how to lead. In matchless grace the divine answer was sent to this soul. This is what God said.

Joshua, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”* (Joshua 1:8). Wisdom and understanding was given.

6. Among the most pleasant objects of meditation is Christ. We honor the Father, we reverence and worship Him, but in the person of Jesus Christ we draw nearest to the Divine, nearer than man has ever drawn before.

In the Old Testament era, during the days of Moses when men drew near to God there was fire and thunder on the mountain when the heavens opened and God came down. The Divine was *essentially* unapproachable.

Then came the Tabernacle and people were happy. God Himself was going to come and dwell in the midst of His people. But a barrier was erected. There was a heavy curtain which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies where the Shekinah Glory radiated. The Divine was *practically* inaccessible except through an appointed mediator.

Then came the Lord Jesus. Though equally very God of very God, Christ humbled Himself and veiled deity with humanity. Suddenly the Divine was *actually* touchable. Christ stood forth and cried with open arms,

- “Come to me”
- “Eat of me”
- “Drink of me”
- “Touch me”
- “Permit the children to come to me.”
- “Bring the sick, I will touch them and heal them.”

The apostle John wrote of, “*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*” (1 John 1:1) Not only did Christ touch men, but men touched the Divine.

Is it any wonder that the Psalmist made much of Christ and said, “*My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.*” (Psalm 103:34) Would you like to know the sweetness of loving the Saviour? You will experience His presence upon your heart when you reflect often upon the Cross of Calvary.

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the Cross I spend;
Life and health and peace possessing
From the sinner’s dying Friend.

Truly blessed is this station,
Low before His Cross-I lie;
While I see divine compassion
Beaming in His languid eye.

Love and grief my heart dividing,
With my tears His feet I’ll bathe;
Constant still in faith abiding,
Life deriving from His death.

For Thy sorrows we adore Thee—
 For the griefs that wrought our peace—
 Gracious Savior! We implore Thee,
 In our hearts Thy love increase.”

Walter Shirley
 1725-1786

Love for Christ increases when we walk to the Cross of Calvary and gaze upon that sacred head now wounded.

“O Sacred Head, now wounded,
 With grief and shame weighed down,
 Now scornfully surrounded
 With thorns, Thine only crown;
 O sacred Head, what glory,
 What bliss, till now was Thine!
 Yet though despised and gory,
 I joy to call Thee mine.

What Thou, my Lord hast suffered
 Was all for sinner’s gain;
 Mine, mine was the transgression,
 But Thine the deadly pain;
 Lo, here I fall, my Saviour!
 ‘Tis I deserve Thy place;
 Look on me with Thy favor,
 Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

What language shall I borrow
 To thank Thee, dearest Friend,
 For this Thy dying sorrow,
 Thy pity without end?

Oh, make me Thine forever;
 And Should I fainting be,
 Lord, let me never, never
 Outlive my love to Thee!

Be near me when I’m dying;
 Oh, show Thy Cross to me!
 And for my succor flying;
 Come, Lord, and set me free!

These eyes, new faith receiving,
 From Jesus shall not move;
 For he who dies believing,
 Dies safely, through Thy love.”

Bernard of Clairvaux

1091-1153

It is the love of Christ that allowed men to wound Him so that such grace, through faith alone, could be offered to the world, and all human efforts cease.

“Not all the blood of beasts,
 On Jewish altars slain,
 Could give the guilty conscience peace,
 Or wash away the stain.

But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
 Takes all our sins away;
 A sacrifice of nobler name,
 And richer blood than they.

My faith would lay her hand
 On that dear head of Thine,
 While like a penitent I stand,
 And there confess my sin.

My soul looks back, to see
 The burdens Thou didst bear,
 When hanging on the cursed tree,
 And hopes her guilt was there.

Believing, we rejoice
 To see the curse remove;
 We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
 And sing His bleeding love.”

Isaac Watts

1674-1748