

Philippians 4:8-9 — “The Importance of Godly Thinking & Godly Living in Your Christian Life!”

- **Polycarp** — the 2nd century bishop of Smyrna: died a martyr’s death at the age of 86 having served as a leader & preacher for 60+ years. He was deeply committed to the truth of the *Written Scripture* in fighting heresies, preaching truth & pleading for holiness!
 - He wrote a letter to the Philippians (some decades after Paul did) and the letter emphasizes right ***THINKING*** and right ***LIVING***.
 - Polycarp wanted to encourage right *beliefs* and right *behaviors*. He knew that wrong behaviors were evidence of wrong beliefs and that wrong beliefs would surely produce wrong behaviors. So he wrote & pleaded with them to STUDY SCRIPTURE and GUARD THEIR MINDS and WALK IN PURITY.
- So, **think** on the things of God. Then, **practice** what you **know** to be Godly.

Phil 4:8-9 —

- To be ***In Christ*** enables us & exhorts us to the highest moral standards while living in the surrounding culture.

THESIS — HOW CAN WE STAND FIRM & LIVE GODLY IN A TWISTED SOCIETY?

1. Godly **PRAYING** (v.6-7)
2. Godly **THINKING** (v.8)
3. Godly **LIVING** (v.9)

The main verbs that drive the verses along are:

- ✓THINK on these things
- ✓PRACTICE these things

I. GODLY PRAYING (6-7)

- **Key Word: PRAYING!**

II. GODLY THINKING (8)

- **Key Word: PONDERING!**
- Even for the busy Kings & leaders of old, nothing was more important than spending much time, frequent times, meditative times, thoughtful times in **God’s Word**: even kings and leaders (very busy people) are to make *this* their first priority (Deut 17.18-20; Josh 1.7-9)!

Whatever is...

1. True -
2. Honorable -
3. Right -
4. Pure -
5. Lovely -
6. Good repute -
7. Excellent -
8. Anything worthy of praise -

“Think”/dwell on these things...

Meditation — [see additional material at end of this handout.]

Meditation is: “fixing our thoughts on spiritual things in order to practice” (William Bates).

Meditation is: “the mind applied to the serious & solemn contemplation of spiritual things for practical uses & purpose” (Thomas Manton).

III. GODLY LIVING (9)

- **Key Word: PRACTICING!**

v.9- things which you have:

1. learned from me (instructed/preached/taught) -
2. received (received it) -
3. heard (heard it) -
4. seen in me (observed it) -

V.9b - the God of peace will be with you!

- The GOD OF PEACE = the God who produces peace (like Rom 15.22). God is the origin, source, giver of peace; He creates peace; He produces peace!
 - It may harken back to Phil 4.7 -- God's peace (an ‘*inclusio*’ structure/bracketing/bookending it together)
- God will be **WITHYOU** --- close accompaniment; it's an unconditional promise of the divine presence that's found ALL thru the Old Testament (see, e.g., Gen 21.22; Ex 3.12; Josh 1.5; Ps 23.4, etc.)
- **Polycarp** wrote a letter, an epistle to the Philippians (after Paul did; mid 2nd century AD). Near the beginning he wrote:
 - “When Paul was among you in the presence of the men of that time, he accurately and reliably taught the word concerning the truth. And when he was absent he wrote you letters; if you study them carefully, you will be able to build yourselves up in the faith that has been given to you.”
- How could Polycarp die a martyr's death with courage & joy & peace?
 - Because his heart had been **immersed** in Scripture for so many decades! He **loved** it. He **studied** it. He **thought** about it. He **memorized** it. He **preached** it. He **lingered** upon it & he **internalized** it!

“Let not a day ordinarily pass you where you will not read some portion of the Bible with due meditation and supplication of it” (Cotton Mather).

May the Mind of Christ My Savior

May the mind of Christ, my Savior,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.

May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.

May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.

May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.

May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.

May His beauty rest upon me,
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.

Take My Life and Let It Be

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
 Take my moments and my days; let them flow in
 ceaseless praise.
 Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of
 Thy love.
 Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for
 Thee.
 Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my
 King.
 Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages
 from Thee.
 Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I
 withhold.
 Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt
 choose.
 Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer
 mine.
 Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal
 throne.
 It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure
 store.
 Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.
 Ever, only, all for Thee.

More on “biblical meditation” (*think on; to ponder; to dwell upon; to consider; to meditate on these things, v.8b*)

The Puritans did seek to **meditate** throughout life, as a complement of praying without ceasing. Thomas Hooker said that meditation is “the main trade that a godly man drives”—his greatest occupation day and night (Ps. 1:2). Joseph Hall said, “Lord, . . . that man is truly holy, whose understanding is enlightened with right apprehensions of thee and heavenly things; whose will and affections are rightly disposed to thee, so that his heart is wholly taken up with thee, his conversation being in heaven; who thinks all time lost, in which he doth not enjoy thee, and a sweet and holy communion with thee; walking perpetually with thee, and laboring in all things to be approved of thee.” Thus Hall encouraged people to see all the world around them as a “stage” to see God’s wisdom and glory, just as Solomon learned from the ant (Prov. 6:6–8) and our Lord taught us by the lilies of the field (Matt. 6:28–30). Thus, Hall said, “There is no creature, event, action, speech, which may not afford us new matter of meditation.” This kind of brief meditation that takes place in the hustle and bustle of daily life they called **occasional meditation**. Several Puritans wrote entire books of examples of occasional meditation to teach their church members how to do this.

However, the Puritans also called people to definite times of what they termed **deliberate meditation**, especially in the morning and evening (Ps. 4:4; 16:7; 63:6; 119:147), and on the Sabbath. If two times a day sometimes proved too much, deliberate meditation should be done at least once a day, they taught. Today we have largely lost the Puritan “art of meditation.” We need to discipline ourselves to engage in daily, deliberate meditation. Our lives are full, and our minds cannot settle into divine meditations without setting aside time for focused thinking to really benefit from the Bible. William Bates says that a passing glance at the night sky only reveals a few stars, but take time to gaze upon the heavens and you see “the whole heaven bespangled with stars in every part.” He reminds us that we aim at “the kindling of a fire in wet wood,” and therefore must keep at it until we experience “some sensible benefit,” that is, “a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God.”

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Here is a method for meditation based on Puritan writings.

First, pray for the power to focus your mind on the Word with faith.

Second, read the Bible and select a verse or two.

Third, repeat those verses to yourself in order to memorize them.

Fourth, think about what those verses say and imply, probing the book of Scripture (other verses on the same topic), the book of conscience (how you have believed or disbelieved, obeyed or disobeyed), and the book of nature (how this truth appears in experience and the world).

Fifth, stir up your affections unto love, desire, grief, hope, zeal, and joy as appropriate. Preach the text to yourself with powerful application.

Sixth, arouse your soul to the specific duty which the text requires, making holy resolutions for the glory of God.

Seventh, conclude with prayers for divine assistance, thanksgiving for graces given, and singing psalms of praise to God.

Further quotes on *Thinking on/dwelling on/meditating on/considering these things* (Phil 4:8b)...

• **What then, does it mean to meditate?**

- Meditation will not be sweet to you until it is first understood, exercised, and then exercised with profit. You cannot know how sweet it is without doing it. And, it is not merely head knowledge of something done. It is an experience with the Savior, Jesus Christ -- in His Word, by the Spirit, to increase our love for Christ!
- Thomas Hooker said, “Meditation is a serious intention of the Mind whereby we come to search out the truth and settle it on the heart.” (The Application of Redemption).
- Thomas Brooks said, “Remember, it is not hasty reading—but serious meditating upon holy and heavenly truths, that make them prove sweet and profitable to the soul. It is not the bee’s touching of the flower, which gathers honey—but her abiding for a time upon the flower, which draws out the sweet. It is not he who reads most—but he who meditates most, who will prove the choicest, sweetest, wisest and strongest Christian.” (Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices)
- William Fenner said, “Meditation is a settled exercise of the mind for the further inquiry of the truth, and so affecting the heart with that, and therefore there are four things in meditation, 1) an exercise of the mind, 2) a settled exercise that dwells on the truth, 3) to make a further inquiry...meditation pulls the latch of the truth and looks into every closet, and every cupboard, and every angle of it, and 4) it labors to affect the heart. (The Use and Benefit of Divine Meditation).
- Thomas White said, “Divine meditation we may say, is a serious solemn thinking and considering of the things of God, to the end that we might understand how much they concern us, and that our hearts by it may be raised to some holy affections and resolutions.” (Instructions for the Art of Divine Meditation).
- Thomas Watson said, “Meditation is the soul’s retiring of itself, that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections.” (The Christian on the Mount).
- John Ball said, “To meditate, signifies primarily to meditate, commune, or discourse with one’s self, or which is the same, to imagine, study, consider or muse in mind or heart. Meditation is a serious, earnest and purposed musing on some point of Christian instruction, tending to lead us forward toward the Kingdom of Heaven, and serving for our daily strengthening against the flesh, the world and the Devil. Or it is the steadfast and earnest bending of the mind on some spiritual and heavenly matter, discoursing on it with ourselves, until we bring it to some profitable point, both for the settling of our judgments, and the bettering of our hearts and lives.” (A Treatise of Divine Meditation).
- Nathaniel Ranew said, “Pious meditation is the duty of every Christian ; or, It is the high institution of Christ, and greatly incumbent duty of Christians, to exercise themselves much in holy meditation. Meditation is of that happy influence, it makes the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and the conversation greatly

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fruitful. Meditation is to be the motion of the heavenly spirit heavenward ; to carry it up to heaven and keep it a time there : a looking of the eye of the mind, and a lifting up of the heart, a making a stay, and taking a spiritual solace in heaven with God.” (Solitude Improved by Divine Meditation).

- Richard Allestree said, “Meditation is, a a serious and solemn considering of Heavenly Things, to the end we may understand how much it concerns us, and that our Hearts thereby may be raised to some holy Affections and Resolutions. Now there are Four kinds of Solemn Meditation, according to their several Subjects. (The Whole Duty of Divine Meditation.)
- Thomas Manton said, “The word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer. . . . [M]editation must follow hearing and precede prayer. . . . What we take in by the word we digest by meditation and let out by prayer.” (Works of Thomas Manton)
- William Bridge said, “It is the vehement or intense application of the soul unto some thing, whereby a man’s mind doth ponder, dwell and fix upon it, for his own profit and benefit. There must be the application, of the soul to some thing; and therefore sometimes it is expressed by laying of a thing to heart: “The righteous are taken away, and no man lays it to heart;” no man considers on it. “If ye will not lay these things to heart,” etc. Mal. 2:2. And as there must be an application, so there must be a vehement and intense application of the soul unto a thing, for every consideration does not make meditation: consideration heightened makes meditation. Meditation is the work of the whole soul. The mind acts, and the memory acts, and the affections act. “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart:” it is an intense and a vehement application of the soul unto truth.” (The Sweetness and Profitableness of Divine Meditation).
- Ezekiel Culverwell said, “Meditation is a study to get grace, whereby * upon all occasions wee make some good use of all that comes to our mind, whereof the frequentest use shows the most heavenly soul, as contrarily the neglect thereof the carnal. (Time Well Spent in Sacred Meditations).
- Thomas Boston said, “Meditation is a necessary duty, to the performance of which, people should set themselves; seriously making choice of such times and places for it, as the duty may be gone about with the best advantage. Meditation is to think on some spiritual thing, in order to the bettering of the heart.” (Complete Works Volume 4)

What is the **purpose**/end/goal of meditation?

First, It is the glorification of God.

Secondly, it is for the edification of ourselves. God never gives us spiritual “busy work” for the sake of work. There is always a purpose for everything under the sun.

Thirdly, it is for the further edification of the church in various ways. Think about this. If we are not thinking Christians what will we neglect to do simply from a lack of thought? What duties will we forget, or what spiritual gifts will we not exercise? Our personal devotional time is critical in our walk as a Christian in the church of Christ eagerly awaiting the day of His coming.

There should be a close watch on these purposes so that we may never mistake or err from using the duty of meditation for the glory of God, for our own profit, and for our own usefulness in the church.

Puritan books (worthy of reading/studying) on the subject of **meditation** (can be found on amazon):

1. The Wells of Salvation Opened – by William Spurstowe (1605-1666)
2. The Saint’s Spiritual Delight, and a Christian on the Mount by Thomas Watson (1620-1686)
3. The Rules of a Holy Life – by Nicholas Byfield (1579–1622)
4. The Art of Happiness – by Francis Rous (1579–1659)
5. Instructions for the Art of Divine Meditation – by Thomas White (d. 1672)
6. A Treatise on Heavenly Mindedness – by Thomas Jollie (1629-1703)
7. A Treatise of Divine Meditation – by John Ball (1585-1640)
8. A Discourse on Self-Examination – by Nathaniel Vincent (1639-1697)

— From Joel Beeke and Matthew McMahon