

It is my humble opinion that fewer things hinder our spiritual growth than lack of diligence—most Christians simply fail to set aside the needed time, and to put forth the necessary effort—in short, we want something for free or with little cost—but Christian maturity and holiness are neither free nor easy, Prov. 13:4—“the soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich...”

This principle is nowhere truer than in our relationship to Scripture—as we have seen for the past few weeks, both in hearing and reading Scripture we are to be proactive and hands-on—to put it simply, both are very demanding, and if you and I are going to truly benefit from either it will be by the sweat of our brow—now this is nowhere more true than when it comes to meditation, a discipline all but forgotten in our day of easy and superficial Christianity, but oh dear brethren a discipline practiced by generations gone by, and as we will find, a discipline essential to Christian growth, Thomas Manton—“Meditation is the life of all the means of grace, and that which makes them fruitful to our souls...”

Our text is a part of Psalm that celebrates the place of Scripture within the life of a Christian—notice there are basically two parts—[1] an assertion—“Oh, how I love your law...” and [2] a consequence—“it is my meditation all the day...”—in other words, because he loved God’s word he often meditated within it—thus I conclude with this truth—Those who love God’s word should meditate upon it...

I. What is meditation?

II. Why should we meditate?

III. How should we meditate?

I. What is meditation?

1. There may have been a time when there would have been no need to define what is meant by “gospel mediation...”
2. But in a day when new age theories and all forms of “spirituality” abound, it becomes necessary to distinguish from biblical or gospel meditation and new age or Eastern meditation...
3. Simply put, gospel mediation is nothing more than deep and purposed thinking upon a specific portion of Scripture...
4. Whereas in new age or Hindu mediation the goal is to empty the mind, in Christian meditation the goal is to fill the mind...
5. Donald Whitney defined mediation as—“...deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in the Scripture for the purpose of understanding, application and prayer...”
6. The Hebrew word often translated “meditate or meditation” literally means—“to reflect, muse, or ponder...”
7. Thus at its very heart gospel mediation is a self reflection upon spiritual realities—it’s filling the mind and heart with the aroma of truth...
8. Wilhelms a Brakel offers a more fuller definition—“...[it is] a spiritual exercise in which a godly person—having a heart that is separated from the earth and lifted up toward heaven—reflects upon and engages his thoughts toward God and divine things with which he was already previously acquainted. He does so in order to be led further into divine mysteries, to be kindled with love, to be comforted, and to be stirred up to lively exercises...”
9. Now let me clarify that the kind of meditation I am here referring to is a more scheduled meditation that takes place in conjunction with our Bible reading...
10. For the Scriptures speak of a more general meditation, for example, upon the works of creation, that might take place randomly...
11. Ps.145:5—“I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works...”—that is—I will meditate upon God and His works...
12. This kind of mediation can take place throughout the day while driving, walking, exercising, or even working...
13. But the kind of meditation I am here referring to takes place with an open Bible, and focuses upon a specific portion of God’s word...

14. It's isolating a small portion of Scripture, upon which we focus the mind and heart in an intensified and purposed way...
15. Thus we might distinguish between a spontaneous and organized mediation—[1] by spontaneous is meant that kind of meditation often referred to as contemplation...
16. Ps.119:97—"Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day..."—that is, I meditatively contemplate throughout the day at random...
17. But [2] by organized is meant that purposed meditation that takes place in conjunction with our daily reading of Scripture and prayer...
18. Thus we find that description of the blessed man in Ps.1:2—"his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night..."
19. That is, there are purposed times wherein he removes himself from the affairs of this life, to read and meditate in the law of his delight...
20. Barns—"...he takes time to do it—designedly setting apart suitable portions of each day, that, withdrawn from the cares of life, he may refresh his spirit by contemplating divine truth, or may become better acquainted with God, and with his duty to him, and may bring to bear upon his own soul more directly the truths pertaining to eternal realities..."

II. Why should we meditate?

A. Meditation is commanded

1. I think this is the proper place to begin, that every Christian has an obligation to meditate upon Scripture as much as to read Scripture...
2. There might be some present within this little congregation who are thinking to themselves—this meditation just isn't for me...
3. I just don't have the time or the ability to think in a prolonged and focused way upon Scripture—I'm just not packaged in that way...
4. Well to such people I would simply respond, that while it is true meditation may more difficult for some, it remains a universal obligation for all Christians...
5. Josh.1:8—"this Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night..."
6. Phil.4:8—"...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 and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things..."
7. 1Tim.4:15—"meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them..."—that is, Timothy was to give himself to that apostolic revelation meditating therein...
8. Now let me state at the outset, that as it is with all of God's commandments, they are for our benefit and not harm...
9. Why are we told to meditate upon Scripture, but because, as I hope to convince you this morning, fewer things are more beneficial to the soul than meditating upon the law and the gospel...
10. Thus, just as we are commanded to hear sermons, and to read Scripture, we are commanded or expected, to meditate upon Scripture...

B. Meditation is commended

1. By this I mean that both within and without the Bible, we again and again find mediation commended through the example of the righteous...
2. For example, think of David throughout Psalm 119, v15—"I will meditate on your precepts..." v48—"I will mediate on your statutes..." v97—"oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day..." v148—"my eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on your word..."
3. But not only has mediation been a favorite for those saints within the Bible, for also for the most eminent Christians throughout Church history...
4. Some of you may know that our puritan forefathers especially write volumes on the necessity, benefits, and mechanics of meditation...

5. Richard Baxter—“If, by the means of mediation you don’t find an increase of all your graces, and don’t grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and are not made more serviceable in your place, and more precious in the eyes of discerning people. If your soul does not enjoy more communion with God and your life isn’t fuller with comfort, then never mediate again and call me no more than a deceiving fool...”

C. Meditation enlightens the mind

1. Fewer disciplines are able to shed light upon a given text like meditation, Ps.49:3—“the meditation of my heart shall give understanding...”
2. Deep thinking upon a text provides insight into the text—it enables us to perceive deep down into the text...
3. To use the imagery of the temple, by meditation we enter within the veil and behold the glory of the text.....
4. For example, if you were to place a tea bag within a cup of hot water, the longer you leave it the more tea gets dissolved into the water...
5. So too—if we were to liken the word of God to a tea bag, and the mind to a cup of water, the longer we meditate upon the word the stronger will be our understanding...
6. Ps.119:99—“I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation...”—that is, meditation is a superior instructor than any professor...
7. In fact, it’s my opinion that daily mediation upon Scripture would render a man more knowledgeable of Scripture than a four year seminary degree without it...
8. Yet, such deep and purposed thinking upon a text takes work, work that I’m afraid not every person is willing to give...
9. If there was ever a generation raised in such a way, whereas deep and intense thinking was foreign, it is this present generation...
10. But brethren, let me ask you—is this present generation any better for it—isn’t it safe to say that we have reared a biblically illiterate and spiritually shallow generation...

D. Meditation stirs the affections

1. Fewer disciplines are more useful to bring the truth of God’s word down from the head into the heart than meditation, Ps.39:3—“as I meditated the fire burned...”
2. One man said—“Reading brings a truth into our head, meditation brings it into our heart”—we could say, meditation brings the weight of the text down upon us...
3. Or we could say through hearing and reading, the word gets into us, but through meditation and pondering we get into the word...
4. It’s as if every word becomes an opened door which leads into the broad meadow of God’s heart—it provides us access into the secret chambers of Jehovah...
5. Every syllable and letter becomes sweet—“How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth...”
6. Oh brethren, if there was ever a path that leads to the third heaven, it is meditation, wherein souls are fitted with wings to fly...
7. George Swinnock—“Meditation to the word is what fire is to water; though water be naturally so cold, yet put fire under it, and it will make it hot and boiling; so, though thine heart be cold in regard of affection to the word, put this fire under it, and it will boil with love to it...”
8. Now this is not to imply that ever time who meditate upon Scripture you and I will always experience such stirring and strengthening of affection...
9. Like any means of grace, hearing, reading, singing, and prayer, there are times when we perceive little immediate benefit...
10. Oh my brethren, how many times have you or I read our Bibles with a cold heart, only to have them heated up by meditation...

E. Meditation engages the will

1. This is the ultimate end of meditation—that the word of God would change us with regards to our practice...
2. Donald Whitney—“Deep thinking on the truths of Scripture is the key to putting them into practice. It is by means of meditation that the facts of biblical information are fleshed out into practical application...”
3. Josh.1:8—“this Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success...”
4. These are the words of the Lord to Joshua, as he was being formally commissioned to replace Moses and lead the people into the Promised Land...
5. Thus these words have a peculiar relevance to Joshua as a leader of God’s people, who would need wisdom in his newly given responsibilities...
6. But I think its right to suggest that this passage has application to the entire nation, who possessed an equal need of encouragement, wisdom, and direction...
7. Notice [a] the command of meditation—“this Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...”
8. Joshua—this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth...”—that is, he was to speak and teach it to the people...
9. Notice necessary to speaking this word is meditation—“this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...”
10. Notice [b] the purpose of meditation—“that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it...”—that is, that you might obey it...
11. Joshua—it is not enough that you speak the word but you must do the word—and how is he equipped to obey this word but by meditation...
12. Notice [c] the blessing of meditation—“for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success...”

III. How should we meditate?

A. Select a specific text

1. The first thing that is necessary for gospel pondering is to select a specific text as the object of our meditations...
2. Now I trust that it’s obvious, there exist no inspired pattern that must be followed—there are many ways a person might use in selecting a text...
3. Let me suggest two options—[1] as you read the Scriptures keep an eye open for an appropriate phrase, statement, or verse...
4. Or else [2] select a portion of Scripture separate from your daily reading for meditation—for example, after reading your assigned chapter [s] select a Psalm or chapter wherein you meditate through verse by verse...
5. Portions of Scripture that have been especially helpful to me in that have been Psalm 1, 2, 19, 22, 23, 45, 110, from the NT, John 3, 4, 5, 6, 14-17, Eph.1,2,3, etc...
6. These are just a selection of the many portions of Scripture that easily lend themselves to an intense and prolonged meditation...
7. Thus the first thing necessary is to select a verse, statement, or phrase, that swells with potential—not every text will...
8. You may chose a phrase or text that yields little fruit and so you chose another one—Luther spoke about the need to shake the branch to see if any fruit falls...
9. If no fruit falls you may have to select another one—or else you may have to shake harder—but either way we must start with an appropriate and specific text...
10. Now with reference to the length of Scripture this may vary from person to person—personally I rarely exceed a short sentence of 4-6 words, aiming at depth instead of breadth...
11. But either way I suggest [especially in the OT] that we find a phrase that directs us to some simple truth—the character of God, sin, salvation, heaven, and hell...

12. But foremostly brethren, I suggest, some way or another we direct our thinking toward our Savior, that One, altogether worthy of our deepest meditations...

B. Discern its basic meaning

1. After selecting a specific text we must then attempt to discern its general or basic meaning—what does the text mean in its context...
2. What do the words mean—are there any other texts that might shed some addition light upon its basic meaning...
3. Perhaps you might consult a reliable commentator or else examine any cross references that might help to shed light upon the text...
4. What I'll typically do is take a few minutes and look up other texts that say the same or similar things—this might shed further light upon your text...
5. For brethren, to put it plainly, meditation without understanding is meaningless—for it is a simple fact, the only way into the heart is through the head...

C. Ask probing questions

1. After obtaining a sufficient understating of our text or phrase, the next thing necessary is that we begin to interrogate it with several questions...
2. For example, let's use our text as an illustration, Ps.119:97—"Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day..."
3. Perhaps we might ask questions—what does it mean to love God's law—why does he love God's law—what is meant by God's law—how did he come to love this law...
4. Or else concerning the next phrase—"It is my meditation all the day..."—what is the connection between these two phrases—what does it mean to meditate—how can a person meditate all the day...
5. Now here I have to clarify that typically mediation is mingled with prayer—asking the text questions but also asking God questions...
6. Donald Whitney—"Meditation must always involve two people—the Christian and the Holy Spirit. Praying over a text is the invitation for the Hoy Spirit to hold His divine light over the words of Scripture to show you what you cannot see without Him..."

D. Apply it personally

1. As we ponder the text and begin to mine out its precious honey we need to place it first of all within our own mouths...
2. In asking the text certain questions and beginning to see its many implications, we must turn such implications inward to our own souls...
3. For example, let's go back to our text—"Oh, how I love your law..."—we must ask ourselves the question, Do we love His law...
4. In other words, we not interrogate the text, but we interrogate our own souls—we get beyond the superficiality so common with mere professors...
5. But we have honest and face to face dealings with our soul—we ask ourselves hard questions—we turn a deaf ear to any excuses...
6. My friends, let me say this very plainly—if you or I no nothing of such personal and honest dealings with our own souls I doubt we know anything of true religion...
7. You see a major difference between a true Christian and a hypocrite, is not necessarily that the one reads his Bible and the other doesn't...
8. But it lies chiefly in this—while the hypocrite reads his Bible, he fails to honestly apply it to his own soul in private...

E. Commit it to memory

1. This will allow us to carry the verse with us throughout our day—it will give us something to ponder as we go about our daily responsibilities...
2. Now I have done my best to provide benefits and practical helps on meditation, but my brethren when it comes right down to it—we will think upon that which we love the most...
3. Remember our text—“Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day...”—why does he meditate upon the law but because he loves it...