

12. HOW THE PURITANS HELP US KNOW GOD BETTER: BIBLE MEDITATION

PSALM 77

1. THE PROBLEM: I HAVE A DAILY BATTLE WITH IN-DWELLING SIN

Psalm 119:11, "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

"Meditate on this power of God, and press it often upon your minds. **We conclude many things of God that we do not practically suck the comfort of, for want of deep thoughts of it and frequent inspection into it.** We believe God to be true, yet distrust him; we acknowledge him powerful, yet fear the motion of every straw. Many truths, though assented to in our understandings, are kept under hatches by corrupt affections, and have not their due influence, because they are not brought forth into the open air of our souls by meditation... A strong God, and a weak faith in omnipotence, do not suit well together." (Stephen Charnock, *Existence and attributes of God*, pp102-103)

2. WHAT ARE YOU LIKE? REASONABLE... AFFECTIONATE... AND FALLEN

- **God made us reasonable / rational**
- **God made us with "affections"**
- **God made us with "reasonable affections".**
Senses... the mind (truth/goodness)... affections (love/repulsed)
- **Sin has messed up our reason, our affections, and their relationship**

3. WE NEED TO GET GOD'S WORD INSIDE OF PEOPLE WHO ARE RATIONAL, AFFECTIONATE AND FALLEN

** Knowing how God made me and what sin has done to me will **affect the way in which we speak God's truth** **

- **Warning: what happens if you *only* address the affections? Or the mind?**

- **Therefore, we need God’s Word with maximum TRUTH...**

About: Jesus, the world, ourselves... unseen realities like heaven/hell/satan/angels/... the consequences of belief/unbelief.

- **... and we need God’s truth with maximum POWER**

Martyn Lloyd-Jones: “logic on fire.”

Jonathan Edwards, “I should think myself in the way of my duty to raise the affections of my hearers as high as possibly I can, provided that they are affected with nothing but truth, and with affections that are not disagreeable to the nature of what they are affected with.” (Jonathan Edwards, *Some thoughts concerning the revival*)

4. WHAT IS BIBLICAL MEDITATION, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **“talking to yourself about God.”**
- **Biblical meditation is NOT the same as eastern/pagan meditation: filling mind... vs. emptying mind.**

- **Some Puritan definitions:**

Thomas Watson: “a holy exercise of the mind whereby we bring the truths of God to remembrance, and do seriously ponder upon them and apply them to ourselves.”

Edmund Calamy: “A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his *heart* inflamed with the love of Christ; so meditate of the Truths of God, as to be transformed into them; and so meditate of sin as to get his heart to hate sin.”

Thomas Manton: “Meditation is a middle sort of duty between the word and prayer, and hath respect to both. The word feedeth meditation, and meditation feedeth prayer; we must hear that we be not erroneous, and meditate that we be not barren. These duties must always go hand in hand; meditation must follow hearing and precede prayer.”

Richard Baxter: “As digestion is the turning of the raw food into chyle and blood, and spirits and flesh, so meditation, rightly managed, turneth the truths received and remembered, into warm affection, raised resolution, and holy and upright conversation.”

Richard Baxter: “Our words have a great reflection and operation upon our own hearts. As they come from them, so they recoil to them.”

- **An example of Bible meditation... in the Bible: Psalm 77**

Remembering God... considering... questions... remembers... overflows into prayer

5. UPON WHAT SHOULD WE MEDITATE?

- **Look up Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 77:12, Ps 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 97, 99, 148):**
- **God and the Gospel!**

Richard Baxter:

Though Christians therefore must study themselves, and keep up a care of their own salvation. Yet must they much more study God, his greatness, wisdom, and goodness, as shining in his works, and word, and in his Son, and as foreseen in the heavenly glory; and in this knowledge of God and Christ is life eternal. And nothing more tendeth to the holy advancement and perfection of the soul, than to keep continually due apprehensions of the divine nature, properties, and glorious appearances in his works upon the soul, so as it may become a constant course of contemplation, and the habit and constitution of the mind, and the constant guide of heart and life.

The praises of God do exercise our highest graces: praise is the very breath of love, and joy, and gratitude: it tendeth to raise us above ourselves, and make our hearts to burn within us, while the glorious name of God is magnified: it hath the most pure, and spiritual, and elevating effect upon the soul; and therefore tendeth most effectually to make us more holy, by the increase of these graces.

(so SING!!!!)

“Read much those Scriptures which speak of the praises of God; especially the Psalms: and furnish your memories with store of those holy expressions of the excellencies of God, which he himself hath taught you in his word... No other dialect so well becometh the work of praise. God, that best knoweth himself, doth best teach us how to know and praise him. Be much in singing psalms of praise, and that with the most heart-raising cheerfulness and melody; especially in the holy assemblies.”

“Especially let the Lord’s day be principally spent in praises and thanksgivings for the work of our redemption, and the benefits thereof... The thankful and praiseful commemoration of the work of man’s redemption, is the special work of the day.”

John Owen:

If we would recover spiritual life, we must come as near as we can unto, and abide as much as we are able at, the well-head of life. Christ is the spring of our spiritual life; he is every way our life. It is in a derivation of life from Christ, and in conformity to him, that we must look for our spiritual life... We are to abide at the well-head of life by a frequency of the acts of faith upon the person of Christ. Faith is that grace, not only whereby we are implanted into Christ, but whereby we also abide in him... Wherefore, my brethren, let me give you this advice, - that you would night and day, upon your beds, in your ways, upon all occasions, have the exercise of faith upon the person of Christ; faith working by a view of him as represented in the gospel, by trust in him, and by invocation of him... labour to have your hearts filled with a love to Jesus Christ, as there is in him made a representation of all divine excellencies... Add meditation hereunto; study Christ more, and all the things of Christ; delight more in the hearing and preaching of Christ.”

6. IN PRACTICE, HOW DO WE LEARN TO MEDITATE?

(i) Select a Bible verse or a Bible truth.

(ii) Memorize it.

E.g. John Piper's "IOUs":

"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain." – Ps 119:36

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in your law." – Ps 119:18

"Unite my heart to fear your name." – Ps 86:11

"Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." – Ps 90:14

(iii) Talk to yourself about it.

Ask some simple questions...

- What does it mean?
- How does it speak to me? To my family? To my church?
- Why might I find this hard to believe? Or to obey?
- What good will come if I am able to believe this and live in the light of it?
- How do I see the praiseworthiness of the Lord? Or the sinfulness of sin?
- How am I encouraged to live for heaven, not for now/sin/self?

(iv) Talk to God about it.

How does this move me to praise and thanksgiving... to confession... to intercession?

(v) Live in the light of it.

What specific acts of obedience does it suggest? (Write them down... do them).
Carry that meditation into your day or your week.

(vi) Bring it to the front of your mind.

(vii) Consider sharing what you've learned with someone else.

HAVE A GO...

*You are really anxious about _____ . You decided to meditate on
Philippians 4:4-7.*