

A TREATISE CONCERNING MEDITATION

by Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson's guide to the practice of Christian meditation on God's provisions, protective care, and personal spiritual experiences as means of deepening faith and gratitude.

2 Chapters

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Chapter 1

A Treatise Concerning Meditation

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A Treatise Concerning Meditation contd

Section 15. Meditate upon your EXPERIENCES. The last subject of meditation is your experiences. Look over your receipts:

1. Has not God provided liberally for you, and given you those spiritual mercies, which he has denied to others who are better than you? Here is an experience, Genesis 48:15. "The God who has fed me all my days." You never eat—but mercy carves for you. You never go to bed—but mercy draws the curtain, and sets a guard of angels about you. Whatever you have, is out of the treasury of free grace! Here is an experience to meditate upon.

2. Has not God prevented many dangers—has he not kept watch and ward about you?

1. What temporal dangers has God screened off? Your neighbor's house on fire—but it has not kindled in your dwellings. Another is infected with the plague—but you are healthy. Behold the golden feathers of protection covering you!

2. What spiritual dangers has God prevented? when others have been poisoned with error, you have been preserved. God has sounded a retreat to you; you have heard "a voice behind you saying—This is the way, walk in it!" When you had enlisted yourself, and taken pay on the devil's side—yet God has "plucked you as a brand out of the fire," turned your heart, and now you espouse Christ's quarrel against sin. Behold preventing grace! Here is an experience to meditate upon.

3. Has not God spared you a long time? Why is it, that others are struck dead in the act of sin—as Ananias and Sapphira—and you are preserved as a monument of God's patience?

Here is an experience: God has done more for you than for the fallen angels; he never granted them repentance—but he has waited for you year after year, Isaiah 30:18. Therefore "will the Lord wait that he may be gracious." He has not only knocked at your heart in the ministry of the word—but he has waited at the door. How long has his Spirit striven with you; like an importunate suitor, who after many denials, yet will not give over the suit. Methinks I see JUSTICE with a sword in its hand ready to strike! But MERCY steps in for the sinner, "Lord, have patience with him a while longer!" Methinks I hear the angels say to God, as the king of Israel once said to the prophet Elisha, 2 Kings 6:22, "Shall I smite them? shall I smite them?" Methinks I hear the angels say, "Shall we take off the head of such a drunkard, swearer, blasphemer?" But MERCY seems to answer as the vine-dresser, Luke 13:8, "Let him alone this year," see if he will repent. Is not here an experience worth meditating upon? Mercy turns justice into a rainbow; the rainbow is a bow indeed—but has no arrow in it! That justice has been like the rainbow without an arrow—that it has not shot you to death—here is a monument of patience to read over and meditate upon.

4. Has not God often come in with assisting grace? When he has bid you mortify such a lust, and you have said as Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:12, "I have no might against this great army!" Then God has come in with auxiliary force, and "his grace has been sufficient." When God has bid

you pray for such a mercy, and you have found yourself very unfit; your heart was at first dead and flat, all of a sudden you are carried above your own strength; your tears drop, and your love flames! God has come in with assisting grace. If the heart burns in prayer—God has struck the fire! The Spirit has been tuning your soul, and now you make sweet melody in prayer. Here is an experience to meditate upon.

5. Has not God vanquished Satan for you? When the devil has tempted to infidelity, to self-murder, when he would make you believe either that your graces were but a fiction, or God's promise but a counterfeit bond; yet you have not been foiled by the tempter—it is God who has kept the garrison of your heart, else Satan's fiery darts would have entered! Here is an experience to meditate on.

6. Have you not had many signal deliverances? When you have been even at the gates of death, God has miraculously recovered you, and renewed your strength as the eagle! May not you write that writing which Hezekiah did? Isaiah 38:6, "The writing of Hezekiah King of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness." You thought the sun of your life was quite setting—but God made this sun turn back many degrees. Here is an experience for meditation to feed upon. When you have been imprisoned by sin—your foot taken in the snare, and the Lord has broken the snare, nay, has made those to break it, who were the instruments of laying it—behold an experience to meditate on! Oh let us often revolve in mind, our experiences. You who have rare receipts of mercy—be often by meditation, looking over your receipts.

1. Meditation on our experiences would raise us to THANKFULNESS. Considering that God has set a hedge of providence about us—he has strewed our way with roses—this would make us take the harp and violin—and praise the Lord, (1 Chronicles 16:4). And not only praise—but record our blessings. The meditating Christian keeps a register or chronicle of God's mercies, that their memory does not decay. God would have the manna kept in the ark many hundred years, that the remembrance of that miracle might be preserved; a meditating soul takes care that the spiritual manna of an experience be kept safe.

2. Meditation on our experiences would engage our hearts to God in OBEDIENCE. Mercy would be a needle to sew us to him! We would cry out as Bernard, "I have, Lord, two mites—a soul and a body—and I give them both to you."

3. Meditation on our experiences would serve to convince us that GOD is no hard master. We might bring in our experiences as a sufficient confutation of that slander. When we have been falling—has not God taken us by the hand? "When I said, 'My foot is slipping,' your love, O Lord, supported me!" Psalms 94:18. How often has God supported our head and heart—when we have been fainting? And is he a hard Master? Is there any Master besides God—who will wait upon his servants? Christians, summon in your experiences. What spiritual enjoyments have you had? What inward serenity and peace—which neither the world can give, nor death take away! A Christian's own experiences may plead for God—against those who desire to censure his ways rather than to try them; and to cavil at them, rather than to walk in them.

4. Meditation on our experiences would make us communicative to others. We would be willing to tell our children and acquaintances, what God has done for our souls— At such a time we were brought low, and God raised us; at such a time in desertion, and God brought a promise to remembrance which dropped in comfort. Meditation on God's gracious dealing with us, would

make us transmit and propagate our experience to others, that the mercies of God shown to us, may bear a plentiful crop of praise when we are dead and gone! So much for the subject matter of meditation; I proceed next to the necessity of meditation.

VII. Showing the NECESSITY of Meditation.

It is not enough to carry 'God's book' about us—but we must meditate on it. The necessity of meditation will appear in three particulars.

1. The end why God has given us his Word written and preached, is not only to know it—but that we should meditate in it. The Scripture is a love letter which the great God has written to us. We must not run it over in haste—but meditate upon God's wisdom in writing, and his love in sending it to us. Why does the physician give his patient a remedy; is it only that he should read it over and know the remedy—or that he should apply it? The end why God communicates his gospel remedies to us, is, that we should apply them by fruitful meditation. Do you think that God would ever have been at the pains of writing his law with his own finger—only that we should have the theory and notion of it? Is it not that we should meditate on it? Would he ever have been at the cost to send abroad his ministers into the world, to furnish them with gifts, Eph. 4, and must they for the work of Christ be near unto death—that the Christians should only have an empty head knowledge of the truths published? Is it speculation or meditation—which God aims at?

2. The necessity of meditation appears in this, because without it we can never be godly Christians. A Christian without meditation is like a soldier without weapons, or a workman without tools.

Without meditation, the truths of God will not stay with us. The heart is hard, and the memory slippery—and without meditation all is lost! Meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind. Serious meditation is like the engraving of letters in gold or marble which endures. Without meditation, all our preaching is but like writing in sand, or like pouring water into a sieve. Reading and hearing without meditation, is like weak medicine which will not work. Lack of meditation has made so many sermons in this age, to have a miscarrying womb and dry breasts!

3. Without meditation the truths which we know will never affect our hearts. Deuteronomy 6:6, "These words which I command this day shall be in your heart." How can the Word be in the heart—unless it be wrought in by meditation? As an hammer drives a nail to the head—so meditation drives a truth to the heart. It is not the taking in of food—but the stomach's digesting it, which makes it turn into nourishment. Just so, it is not the taking in of a truth at the ear—but the meditating on it, which is the digestion of it in the mind, which makes it nourish. Without meditation, the Word preached may increase notion, but not affection. There is as much difference between the knowledge of a truth, and the meditation on a truth, as there is between the light of a torch, and the light of the sun. Set up a lamp or torch in the garden, and it has no influence. But the sun has a sweet influence, it makes the plants to grow, and the herbs to flourish. Just so, knowledge is like a torch lighted in the understanding, which has little or no influence—it does not make not a man the better. But meditation is like the shining of the sun—it operates upon the affections, it warms the heart and makes it more holy. Meditation fetches life in a truth. There are many truths which lie, as it were, in the heart dead—which when we meditate upon, they begin to have life and heat in them. Meditation on a truth is like rubbing a man in a swoon—it fetches life. It

is meditation, which makes a Christian!

4. Without meditation we make ourselves guilty of slighting God and his Word. If a man lets a thing lie aside, and never minds it—it is a sign he slights it. God's Word is the book of life; not to meditate in it—is to undervalue it. If a king puts forth an edict or proclamation, and the subjects never mind it—it is a slighting of the king's authority. God puts forth his law as a royal edict; if we do not meditate on it, it is a slighting his authority, and contempt done to the divine majesty!

VIII. Showing the reason WHY there are so few godly Christians.

Use 1. Information.

It gives us a true account why there are so few godly Christians in the world; namely, because there are so few meditating Christians. We have many who have Bible ears, they are swift to hear—but slow to meditate. This duty is grown almost out of fashion, people are so much in the shop, that they are seldom on the Mount with God. Where is the meditating Christian? Where is he who meditates on sin, hell, eternity, the recompense of reward—who takes a prospect of heaven every day? Where is the meditating Christian? It is to be bewailed in our times, that so many who go under the name of professors, have banished godly discourse from their tables, and meditation from their closets. Surely the hand of Joab is in this. The devil is an enemy to meditation; he cares not how much people read and hear; he knows that meditation is a means to compose the heart, and bring it into a gracious frame. Satan is content that you should be hearing and praying Christians, just so long as you are not meditating Christians. He can stand your small shot, provided you do not put in this bullet.

IX. A REPROOF to such as do not Meditate in God's Word.

Use 2. Of reproof.

It serves to reprove those who meditate indeed—but not in the Word of God. They turn all their meditations the wrong way; like a man who lets forth the water of his mill which should grind his corn, into the highway, where it does no good. Just so, there are many who let out their meditations upon other fruitless things which are in no way beneficial to their souls.

1. The farmer meditates on his acres of land, not upon his soul. His meditation is how he may improve a barren piece of ground, not how he may improve a barren mind; he will not let his ground lie fallow—but he lets his heart lie fallow; there is no spiritual culture, not one seed of grace sown there.

2. The physician meditates upon his remedies—but seldom on those remedies which the gospel prescribes for his salvation, faith and repentance. Commonly the devil is physician to the physician, having given him such stupefying drug, that for the most part he dies of a lethargy.

3. The lawyer meditates upon the common law; but as for God's law he seldom meditates in it either day or night. The lawyer while he is meditating on his client's evidences, often forgets his own; most have their spiritual evidences to seek, when they should have them to show.

4. The tradesman is for the most part meditating upon his wares; his study is how he may increase his estate, and make the ten talents into a hundred. He is "cumbered about many things;" he does

not meditate in the book of God's book—but in his account-book day and night. In the long run you will see these were fruitless meditations, you will find that you are but golden beggars, and have gotten but the fool's purchase when you die, Luke 12:20.

5. There is another sort that meditate only upon mischief, "who devise iniquity," Micah 2:1. They meditate how to defame and to defraud; Amos 8:5, "They make the ephah small, and the shekel great." The ephah was a measure used in buying, the shekel a weight used in selling. Many who should support, too often supplant one another. And how many meditate revenge? It is sweet to them as dropping honey. "Their hearts shall meditate terror," Isaiah 38:18. The sinner is a felon to himself, and God will make him a terror to himself.

X. A holy PERSUASIVE to Meditation.

Use 3. Of Exhortation.

I am in the next place to exhort Christians to this so necessary duty of meditation. If ever there were a duty I would press upon you with more earnestness and zeal, it would be this, because so much of the vitals and spirit of religion lies in it. The plant may as well bear fruit without watering, the food may as well nourish without digesting, as we can fructify in holiness without meditation. God provides the food, ministers can but cook and dress it for you—but it must be inwardly digested by meditation. For lack of this you may cry out with the prophet, Isaiah 24:16, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me." O let me persuade such as fear God, seriously to set upon this duty. If you have formerly neglected it, bewail your neglect, and now begin to make conscience of it! Lock up yourselves with God (at least once a day) by holy meditation. Ascend this hill, and when you have gotten to the top of it—you shall see a fair prospect—Christ and heaven before you. Let me put you in mind of that saying of Bernard, "O saint, know you not that your husband Christ is bashful, and will not be affectionate in company, retire yourself by meditation into the closet, or the field, and there you shall have Christ's embraces." Cant. 7:11, 12, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, there will I give you my love."

O that I might invite Christians to this rare duty. Why is it that you do not meditate in God's law? Let me expostulate the case with you; what is the reason? Methinks I hear some say, "We are indeed convinced of the necessity of the duty—but alas there are many things that hinder!" There are two great objections that lie in the way, I shall remove them, and then hope the better to persuade to this duty.

XI. The answering of OBJECTIONS.

Objection 1. I have so much business in the world, that I have no time to meditate.

Answer. The world indeed is a great enemy to meditation. It is easy to lose one's purse in a crowd; and in a crowd of worldly employments, it is easy to lose all the thoughts of God. So long as the heart is an Exchange, I do not expect that it should be a Temple. But, to answer the objection; have you so much business that you have no time for meditation—as if piety were a minor matter—a thing fit only for idle hours? What! No time to meditate! What is the business of your life—but meditation? God never sent us into the world to get riches, (I speak not against labor in a vocation) but I say this is not the end of our existence. The errand God sent us into the world about, is salvation; and that we may attain the end, we must use the means, namely, holy

meditation. Now, have you no time to meditate? just as if a farmer should say that he has so much business, that he has no time to plough or sow; why, what is his occupation but plowing and sowing!

What a madness is it to hear Christians say they have no time to meditate? what is the business of their lives but meditation? O take heed lest by growing rich, you grow worth nothing at last. Take heed that God does not sue out the statute of bankruptcy against you, and you be disgraced before men and angels. No time for meditation! You shall observe that others in former ages have had as much business as you, and public affairs to look after, yet they were called upon to meditate, Joshua 1:8. "You shall meditate in this book of the Law." Joshua might have pleaded an excuse, he was a soldier, a commander, and the care of marshaling his army lay chiefly upon him, yet this must not take him off from piety; Joshua must meditate in the book of God's law. God never intended that the great business of piety should give way to a shop or farm; or that a particular vocation should jostle out the general duty to holiness.

2. Objection. But this duty of meditation is hard. To set time apart every day to get the heart into a meditating frame is very difficult; Gerson reports of himself, that he was sometimes three or four hours before he could work his heart into a spiritual frame.

Answer. Does this hinder? To this I shall give a threefold reply.

1. The price that God has set heaven at, is labor. Our salvation cost Christ blood, it may well cost us sweat. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence," Matthew 11:12. It is as a garrison which holds out, and the duties of religion are the taking it by storm. A godly Christian must offer violence to himself, (though not natural-self, yet sinful-self.) Self is nothing but the flesh. The flesh cries out for ease, it is a libertine! It is reluctant to take pains, reluctant to pray, to repent—it is reluctant to put its neck under Christ's yoke! Now a Christian must hate himself; no man ever yet hated his own flesh, Ephesians 5:29. Yes, in this sense he must hate his own flesh, "The lusts of the flesh," Romans 8:13. He must offer violence to himself by mortification and meditation. You say that it is hard to meditate. Is it not harder to lie in hell?

2. We do not argue so in other things; riches are hard to come by, therefore I will sit still and be without them. No! Difficulty is the whetstone of industry. How will men venture for gold? and shall we not spend and be spent for that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir? By meditation we suck out the quintessence of a promise.

3. Though while we are first entering upon meditation it may seem hard, yet when once we are entered it is sweet and pleasant. Christ's yoke at the first putting on, may seem heavy—but when once it is on, it becomes easy; it is not a yoke, but a crown. "Lord," says Austin, "the more I meditate on you, the sweeter you are to me!" According to holy David, "My meditation on you shall be sweet," Psalms 104:34. The poets say the top of Olympus was always quiet and serene. Just so, it is hard climbing up the rocky hill of meditation—but when we are got up to the top, there is a pleasant prospect, and we shall sometimes think ourselves even in heaven. By holy meditation the soul does as it were, breakfast with God every morning. When a Christian is upon the mount of meditation, he is like Peter on the mount when Christ was transfigured, Matt. 17. He cries out, "Lord, it is good to be here!" He is reluctant to go down the mount again. If you come to him, and tell him of a purchase, he thinks you bid him to his loss!

What hidden manna does the soul taste, now that it is on the mount! How sweet are the visits of God's Spirit! When Christ was alone in the wilderness, then the angel came to comfort him. When the soul is alone in holy meditation and prayer, then not an angel—but God's own Spirit does come to comfort him. A Christian who meets with God in the mount, would not exchange his hours of meditation for the most orient pearls or sparkling beauties that the world can afford. No wonder David spent the whole day in meditation, Psalms 119:97. Nay, as if the day had been too little, he borrows a part of the night too, Psalms 63:6, "when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches." When others were sleeping, David was meditating. He who is given much to meditation, shall with Sampson find a honeycomb in this duty. Therefore let not the difficulty, discourage. The pleasantness will infinitely countervail the pains.

XII. Concerning OCCASIONAL Meditations.

Having removed these two objections out of the way, let me again revive the exhortation to "meditate in God's law day and night." And there are two sorts of meditation which I would persuade to—

1. Occasional, and 2. Deliberate.

1. OCCASIONAL meditations, such as are taken up on any sudden occasion. There is nothing almost which occurs—but we may presently raise some meditation upon. As a good herbalist extracts the spirits and quintessence out of every herb, so a Christian may extract matter of meditation, from every occurrence. A gracious heart, like fire, turns all objects into fuel for meditation. I shall give you some instances. When you look up to the heavens, and see them richly embroidered with light, you may raise this meditation. If the footstool is so glorious, what is the throne where God himself sits! When you see the skies bespangled with stars, think, what is Christ The Bright Morning Star! Monica, Augustine's mother, standing one day, and seeing the sun shine, raised this meditation, "Oh! if the sun is so bright, what is the light of God's presence?" When you hear music which delights the senses, presently raise this meditation, "What music like a good conscience; this is the bird of paradise within, whose chirping melody does enchant and ravish the soul with joy!" He who has this music all day, may take David's pillow at night, and say with that sweet singer, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep," Psalms 4:8. How blessed is he who can find heaven in his own bosom! When you are dressing yourselves in the morning, awaken your meditation, think thus—but have I been dressing the hidden man of the heart? Have I looked at my heart in the glass of God's Word? I have put on my clothes—but have I put on Christ? it is reported of Pambo, that seeing a gentlewoman dressing herself all the morning by her glass, he fell a-weeping: "O says he, this woman has spent the morning in dressing her body, and I sometimes spend scarcely an hour in dressing my soul!" When you sit down to dinner, let your meditation feed upon this first course, "How blessed are those who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! What a royal feast will that be, which God prepares! What a love-feast will that be, where none shall be admitted but friends!" When you go to bed at night, imagine thus, "Shortly I shall put off the earthly clothes of my body, and make my bed in the grave!" When you see the judge going to court, and hear the trumpet blow, think with yourselves, as Hierom did, that you are still hearing that shrill trumpet sounding in your ears, "Arise you dead and come to judgment!" When you see a poor man going on the streets, raise this meditation, "Here is a walking picture of Christ!" He had no place where to lay his head, Matthew 8:10. My Savior became poor, that I through his poverty

might be made rich!" When you go to church, think thus, "I am now going to hear God speak, let me not stop my ear; if I refuse to hear him speaking in his Word, I shall next hear him speaking in his wrath!" Psalms 2:5. When you walk abroad in your orchard, and see the plants bearing, and the herbs nourishing, think how pleasing a sight it is to God—to see a thriving Christian; how beautiful are the trees of righteousness when they are hung full of fruit—when they abound in faith, humility, knowledge! When you pluck a rose-bud in your gardens, raise this contemplation, "How lovely are the early buddings of grace! God prizes a Christian in the bud, he likes the blooming of youth, rather than the shedding of old age!" When you eat a grape from the tree, think of Christ the true vine; how precious is the blood of that grape! such rare clusters grow there, that the angels themselves delight to taste of!

It is said of Augustine, he was much in these extempore meditations. A gracious heart, like the philosopher's magic stone, turns all into gold—he has heavenly meditations from earthly occurrences. The skilled chemist, when several metals are mingled together, can by his skill extract the gold and silver from the baser metals. Just so, a Christian, by a divine chemistry, can extract golden meditations from the various earthly objects he beholds! Indeed it argues a spiritual heart, to turn everything to a spiritual use; and we have Christ's own example for these occasional meditations, John 4:7-14. While he sat on Jacob's well, he presently meditates on that, and breaks forth into a most excellent discourse concerning the water of life. So much for occasional meditations.

2. Be exhorted to DELIBERATE meditations, which are the chief. Set some time apart every day, that you may in a serious and solemn manner converse with God in the mount: A godly man, is a man set apart, Psalms 4:3, as God sets him apart by election, so he sets him apart by meditation.

XIII. The fittest TIME for Meditation.

Question 1. What is the fittest time for meditation?

Answer. For the timing of it, it is rather hard to prescribe, because of men's various callings and employments. But if I may freely speak my thoughts, the morning is the fittest time for meditation. The best time to converse with God is, when we may be most in private, that is, before worldly concerns stand knocking as so many suitors at the door to be let in. The morning is, as it were, the cream of the day—let the cream be taken off, and let God have it. In the distilling of strong-water, the first water that is drawn from the still is more full of spirits, the second drawing is weaker; so the first meditations that are stilled from the mind in a morning, are the best, and we shall find them to be most full of life and spirits. The morning is the golden hour. God loved the first-fruits, Exodus 23:19. "The first of the first-fruits you shall bring into the house of the Lord." Let God have the first-fruits of the day; the first of our thoughts must be reserved for heaven. The student takes the morning for his study. The usurer gets up in the morning and looks over his books of account: a Christian must begin with God in the morning. David was with God before break of day, Psalms 119:147. "I rise before dawn and cry out for help; I put my hope in Your Word."

Question 2. But why the morning for meditation?

Answer 1. Because in the morning the mind is fittest for holy duties; a Christian is most himself then. What weary devotion will there be at night when a man is even tired out with the business of the day! He will be fitter to sleep, than to meditate. The morning is the queen of the day; then the

imagination is quickest, the memory strongest, the spirits freshest, the body most refreshed, having restored its strength by sleep. It is a sure rule, then is the best time to serve God, when we find ourselves most in tune. In the morning the heart is like a violin—strung and put in tune, and then it makes the sweetest melody.

2. The morning thoughts stay longest with us the whole day afterwards. The wool takes the first dye best, and is not easily worn out. When the mind receives the impression of good thoughts in the morning, it holds this sacred dye the better; and like an ingrained color, it will not easily be lost. The heart keeps the relish of morning meditations, as a cup receives a tincture and savor of the wine which is first put into it; or as linen in a cedar chest—which keeps the scent a great while after. Perfume your mind with heavenly thoughts in the morning—and it will not lose its spiritual fragrantcy! Wind up your heart towards heaven in the beginning of the day—and it will go the better all the day afterwards. It is with receiving thoughts into the mind, as it is with receiving guests into an inn—the first guests which come, will get the best rooms in the house; if others come afterwards, they get the worse rooms. Just so, when the mind entertains holy meditations for its morning-guests, if afterwards earthly thoughts come, they are put into some of the worst rooms—they lodge lowest in the affections. The best rooms are taken up in the morning, for Christ. He who loses his heart in the morning, in the world; will hardly find it again all the day after.

3. It is a part of that solemn respect and honor we give to God—to let him have the first thoughts of the day. We give people of quality, the best treatment—we let them take the first place. If we honor God (whose name is reverend and holy) we will let the thoughts of God take first place. When the world has the first of our thoughts, it is a sign the world lies uppermost, we love it most. The first thing a covetous man meditates on in the morning, is his money; a sign his gold lies nearest to his heart. O! Christians, let God have your morning meditations. He takes it in disdain, to have the world served before him. Suppose a king and a criminal were to dine in the same room, and to sit at two tables; if the criminal would have his food brought up, and be served first, the king might take it in high disdain, and look upon it as a contempt done to his person. When the world is served first, all our morning thoughts attending it; and the Lord shall be put off with the dregs of the day, when our thoughts begin to run low—is not this a contempt done to the God of glory!

4. Equity requires it. God deserves the first of our thoughts; some of his first thoughts were upon us; we had a being in his thoughts; before we had a being he thought upon us, Ephesians 1:4. "Before the foundations of the world." Before we fell, he was thinking how to raise us. We had the morning of his thoughts. O! what thoughts of free grace, what thoughts of peace has he had towards us! We have taken up his thoughts from eternity; if we have had some of God's first thoughts, well may he have our first thoughts.

5. This is to imitate the pattern of the saints. Job rose early in the morning, and offered sacrifice, Job 1:5. David, when he awaked, was with God, Psalms 139:17, and indeed this is the way to have a morning blessing. "In the morning the dew fell," Exodus 16:13. The dew of a blessing falls early—now we are likeliest to have God's company. If you would meet with a friend, you go early in the morning before he be gone out. We read that the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles, Acts 2:3-4, and it was in the morning, as may be gathered from Peter's sermon, verse 15, Acts 2:15, it was but "the third hour of the day." The morning is the time for fruitfulness, "In the morning shall you make your seed to flourish," Isaiah 17:11. By morning meditation, we make the seed of

grace to flourish.

I would not by this, wholly exclude EVENING meditation. Isaac went out to meditate in the eventide, Genesis 24:63. When business is over, and everything calm, it is good to take a turn with God in the evening. God had his evening sacrifice, as well as his morning, Exodus 29:39. As the cream at the top is sweet, so is the sugar at the bottom; in two cases, the evening meditation does well.

1. In case such has been the urgency of business, that you have time only for reading and prayer; then recompense the lack of the morning meditation, with evening meditation.

2. In case you find yourself more inclinable to good thoughts in the evening, for sometimes there is a greater impetus upon the heart, a greater aptitude and tuneableness of mind, dare not neglect meditation at such a time. Who knows but it may be a quenching the Spirit; do not drive this blessed dove from the ark of your soul. In these cases evening meditation is seasonable. But I say, if I may cast in my verdict, the morning is to be preferred; as the flower of the sun opens in the morning to take in the sweet beams of the sun, so open your soul in the morning to take in the sweet thoughts of God. So much for the timing of meditation.

XIV. How LONG Christians should meditate.

Question 2. But how long should I meditate?

Answer. If we consider how long the world has, it is fit that we give God at least one half hour every day. I shall only say this for a general rule—meditate so long until you find your heart grow warm in this duty.

If when a man is cold, you ask how long he should stand by the fire? Surely, until he be thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, your heart is cold; never a day, no not the hottest day in summer—but your heart freezes; now stand at the fire of meditation until you find your affections warmed, and you are made fit for spiritual service. David mused until his heart waxed hot within him, Psalms 39:3. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard, "Lord, I will never come away from you—without you." Let this be a Christian's resolution—not to leave off his meditations of God until he finds something of God in him—some "moving of affections after God," Cant. 5:4. Some "flamings of love," Cant. 6:8.

XV. Concerning the USEFULNESS of Meditation.

Having answered these questions, I shall next show the benefit and usefulness of meditation. I know not any duty that brings in greater income and revenue than this. It is reported of Thales, that he left the affairs of state to become a contemplating philosopher. O! did we know the advantage which comes by this duty, we would often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, that we might give ourselves to meditation. The benefit of meditation appears in seven particulars.

1. Meditation is an excellent means to profit by the Word. Reading may bring a truth into the head, meditation brings it into the heart! It is better to meditate on one sermon—than to hear five sermons. Many complain that they do not profit from sermons; this may be the chief reason—because they chew not the cud—they do not meditate on what they have heard. If an angel should come from heaven, and preach to men, nay, if Jesus Christ himself were their

preacher, they would never profit without meditation. It is the settling of the milk that makes it turn to cream; and it is the settling of a truth in the mind, that makes it turn to spiritual nourishment. The bee sucks the flower, and then works it in the hive, and makes honey of it. The hearing of a truth preached is the sucking of a flower, there must be a working it in the hive of the heart by meditation, then it turns to honey. There is a disease in children called the rickets, when they have large heads—but their lower parts are small and thrive not. Many professors have the spiritual rickets, they have large heads, much knowledge—but yet they thrive not in godliness, their heart is faint, their feet feeble, they don't walk vigorously in the ways of God; and the cause of this disease is, the lack of meditation. Bible knowledge without meditation, makes us no better than devils! Satan is an angel of light, yet black enough.

2. Meditation makes the heart serious, and then it is ever best. Meditation ballasts the heart; when the ship is ballasted, it is not so soon overturned by the wind; and when the heart is ballasted with meditation, it is not so soon overturned with vanity. Some Christians have light hearts, Zephaniah 3:4, "his prophets are light." A light Christian will be blown into any opinion or vice; you may blow a feather any way: there are many feathery Christians; the devil no sooner comes with a temptation but they are ready to take fire. But meditation makes the heart serious, and God says of a serious Christian, as David of Goliath's sword, "there is none like that, give it to me." Meditation consolidates a Christian; solid gold is best; the solid Christian is the only metal that will pass current with God. The more serious the heart grows, the more spiritual, and the more spiritual, the more it resembles the Father of spirits. When a man is serious he is fittest for employment. The serious Christian is fittest for service, and it is meditation which brings the heart into this blessed frame.

3. Meditation is the bellows of the affections. Meditation hatches good affections, as the hen hatches her young ones by sitting on them. We light affection at this fire of meditation, "while I was musing the fire burned," Psalms 39:3. David was meditating on mortality, and see how his heart was affected with it, verse 4, "Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be. Remind me that my days are numbered, and that my life is fleeing away." The reason our affections are so chill and cold in spiritual things, is, because we do not warm ourselves more at the fire of meditation. Illumination makes us shining lamps, meditation makes us burning lamps. What is it to know Christ by speculation, and not by affection? It is the proper work of meditation to excite and blow up holy affections. What sparkling of love in such a soul! When David had meditated on God's law, he could not choose it, but love it, Psalms 119:97. "O how love I your law! it is my meditation all the day." When the spouse had by meditation viewed those singular beauties in her beloved, white and ruddy, Cant. 5. she grew lovesick, verse 8. Galeatius Caraccialus, that famous Marquis of Vico, who had been much in the contemplation of Christ, breaks out into a holy pathos, "Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ!"

4. Meditation fits for holy duties. The musician first puts his instrument in tune—and then he plays a song. Just so, meditation tunes the heart—and then it is fit for any holy service. As the sails to the ship, so is meditation to duty, it carries on the soul more swiftly.

1. Meditation fits for HEARING. When the ground is softened by meditation, now is a fit time for the seed of the Word to be sown.

2. Meditation fits for PRAYER. Prayer is the spiritual pulse of the soul, by which it beats strongly after God. There is no living without prayer; a man cannot live—unless he breathes; no more can the soul live—unless it breathes out its desires to God. Prayer ushers in mercy, and prayer sanctifies mercy, it makes mercy to be mercy, 1 Timothy 4:5. Prayer has power over God, Hosea 12:4. Prayer comes with letters of request to heaven. Prayer is the spiritual leech—which sucks the poison of sin out of the soul. What a blessed (shall I say duty or) privilege is prayer! Meditation is a help to prayer; Gerson calls it the nurse of prayer. Meditation is like oil to the lamp; the lamp of prayer will soon go out unless meditation feeds it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles-doves—if you separate one, the other dies. A skillful angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in his hook. Just so, when the heart is warmed by meditation, now is the best season to throw in the hook of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating, he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder, it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a Christian is fittest by prayer to discharge, now he sends up whole volleys of sighs and groans to heaven.

Meditation has a double benefit in it—it pours in, and pours out. First it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again into prayer. Meditation first furnishes with matter to pray, and then it furnishes with a heart to pray, Psalms 39:3. "I was musing," says David, and the very next words are a prayer, "Lord make me to know my end;" and Psalms 143:5-6, "I muse on the works of your hands, I stretch forth my hands to you;" the musing of his head made way for the stretching forth of his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the mount, then he prayed. Just so, when the soul is upon the mount of meditation, now it is in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation. Meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear.

3. Meditation fits for HUMILIATION. When David had been contemplating the works of creation, their splendor, harmony, motion, influence—the plumes of pride fall off—and he begins to have self-abasing thoughts, Psalms 8:3-4. "When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars which you have ordained—What is man that you are mindful of him!"

4. Meditation is a strong antidote against SIN. Most sin is committed for lack of meditation. Men often sin through ignorance. Would they be so brutishly sensual as they are, if they did seriously meditate upon what sin is? Would they take this viper in their hand—if they did but consider its sting? Sin puts a worm into conscience, a sting into death, and a fire into hell. Did men meditate on this—that after all their dainty dishes, death will bring in the reckoning, and they must pay the reckoning in hell—they would say as David in another sense, "let me not eat of their dainties," Psalms 141:4. The devil's apple has a bitter core in it. Did men think of this—surely it would put them into a cold sweat, and be as the angel's drawn sword to affright them! Meditation is a golden shield to beat back sin! When Joseph's mistress tempted him to wickedness, meditation did preserve him, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Meditation makes the heart like wet tinder—it will not take the devil's fire!

5. Meditation is a cure of COVETOUSNESS. The covetous man is an idolater, Colossians 3:5. Though he will not bow down to an idol, yet he worships engraved images in his coins. Now meditation is an excellent means to lessen our esteem of the world. Great things seem little to him who stands high; if he could live among the stars—the earth would seem as nothing. To a Christian who stands high upon the pinnacle of meditation—how do all worldly things disappear,

and seem as nothing to him! He does not see in them, what men of the world see. He is gotten into his tower, and heaven is his prospect. What is said of God, "He dwells on high, he humbles himself to behold the things done on the earth," Psalms 113:6, I may allude to with reverence. The Christian who dwells on high by meditation, accounts it an abasing of himself, to look down upon the earth, and behold the things done in this lower region. Paul, whose meditations were sublime and seraphic, looked at things which were not seen, 2 Cor. 4 ult. How did he trample upon the world, how did he scorn it? "I am crucified to the world," Galatians 6:14, as if he had said, "it is too much below me, to mind it!" He who is catching at a crown, will not fish for minnows. A Christian who is elevated by holy meditation, will not set his heart where his feet should be—upon the earth.

6. Holy meditation banishes vain and sinful thoughts. It purges the imagination, "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you," Jeremiah 4:14. The mind is the shop where sin is first framed. Sin begins at the thoughts. The thoughts are the first plotters and contrivers of evil. The mind and imagination are the stage where sin is first acted. The malicious man acts over sin in his thoughts, he contemplates revenge. The impure person acts over immorality in his thoughts, he contemplates lust. The Lord humbles us for our contemplative wickedness, Proverbs 30:32. "If you have thought evil, lay your hand upon your mouth." How much sin do men commit in the chamber of their imagination?

Meditating in God's law would be a good means to banish these sinful thoughts. If David had carried the book of the law about him, and meditated in it, he would not have looked on Bathsheba with a lascivious eye, 2 Samuel 2:11. Holy meditation would have quenched that wildfire of lust. The Word of God is pure, Psalms 119:140, not only subjectively—but effectively. It is not only pure in itself—but it makes them pure who meditate in it. Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, John 2:15. Holy meditation would whip out idle and vagrant thoughts, and not allow them to lodge in the mind. What is the reason the angels in heaven have not one vain thought? They have a sight of God, their eye is never off him. If the eye of the soul were fixed on God by meditation, how would vain impure thoughts vanish! As when that woman was in the tower, and Abimelech came near to the tower to have entered, but she threw a mill-stone out of the tower upon him, and killed him, Judges 9:52. Just so, when we have gotten into the high tower of meditation, and sinful thoughts would come near to enter, we may from this tower throw a millstone upon them, and destroy them. And thus you have seen the benefit of meditation.

XVI. The EXCELLENCY of Meditation.

Aristotle places felicity, in the contemplation of the mind. Meditation is highly commended by Augustine, Chrysostom, and Cyprian—as the nursery of piety. Hierom calls it his Paradise. With what words shall I set it forth? Other duties have done excellently—but "you excel them all." Meditation is a friend to all the graces, it helps to water the plantation. I may call it in Basil's expression, the treasury where all the graces are locked up; and with Theophylact, the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory. By meditation the spirits are raised and heightened to a kind of angelic frame. Meditation sweetly puts us in heaven, before we arrive there. Meditation brings God and the soul together, 1 John 3:2.

Meditation is the saints' looking glass, by which they see things invisible. Meditation is the golden ladder by which they ascend to paradise. Meditation is the spy they send abroad to search the land of promise, and it brings a cluster of the grapes of Eshcol with it. Meditation is the dove they

send out, and it brings an olive branch of peace in its mouth. But who can tell how sweet honey is, save they that taste it? The excellency of meditation I leave to experienced Christians, who will say the comfort of it may be better felt than expressed. To excite all to this so useful, excellent (I had almost said angelic) duty, let me lay down some divine motives to meditation; and how glad would I be, if I might revive this duty among Christians.

XVII. Divine MOTIVES to Meditation.

1. Meditation manifests what a man really is. By this he may take a measure of his heart, whether it be good or bad. Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart—so he is." As the meditation is—such is the man. Meditation is the touchstone of a Christian, it shows what metal he is made of. Meditation is a spiritual index. The index shows what is in the book—so meditation shows what is in the heart. If all a man's meditations are how he may get power against sin, how he may grow in grace, how he may have more communion with God; this shows what is in his heart—the frame of his heart is spiritual. By the beating of this pulse, judge of the health of your soul. It is made the character of a godly man—that he fears God, "and thinks on his name," Malachi 3:17. As are the thoughts—such is the heart. But the thoughts of the ungodly are taken up with pride and lust. "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity," Isaiah 59:7. When vain sinful thoughts come, ungodly men make much of them, they make room for them, they shall eat and lodge with them. But if a good thought happens to come into their mind, it is soon turned out of doors, as an unwelcome guest; this argues much unsoundness of heart. Let this provoke to holy meditation.

2. The thoughts of God, as they bring delight with them—so they leave peace behind them. Those are the best hours which are spent with God. Conscience, as the bee, gives honey. It will not grieve us when we come to die—that we have spent our time in holy soliloquies and meditations. But what honor will the sinner have, when he shall ask conscience the question as Joram did Jehu, 2 Kings 9:22, "Is it peace, conscience, is it peace?" And conscience shall say as Jehu, "What peace, as long as the whoredoms of your mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" Oh how sad will it be with a man at such a time? Christians, as you desire peace, "meditate in God's law day and night." This duty of meditation being neglected, the heart will run wild, it will not be a vineyard—but a wilderness.

3. Meditation keeps the heart in a good spiritual health. It plucks up the weeds of sin, it prunes the wasteful branches, it waters the flowers of grace, it sweeps all the walks in the heart, that Christ may walk there with delight. For lack of holy meditation, the heart lies like the sluggard's field, Proverbs 24:31, all overgrown with thorns and briars—with unclean, earthly thoughts. It is rather the devil's hog sty, than Christ's garden. It is like a house fallen to ruin, fit only for unclean spirits to inhabit.

4. The fruitlessness of all worldly meditations. One man lays out his thoughts about laying up money; his meditations are how to raise himself in the world, and when he has arrived at an estate, often God blows upon it, Haggai 1:9. His care is for his child, and perhaps God takes it away, or if it lives, it proves a cross. Another meditates how to satisfy his ambition, "Honor me before the people," 1 Samuel 15:30. Alas, what is honor—but a meteor in the air; a torch lighted by the breath of people, with the least puff blown out! How many live to see their names buried before them? When this sun is in its meridian splendor—it soon sets in a cloud.

Thus fruitless are those meditations which do not center upon God. It is but to carry dust against the wind. But especially at death; then a man sees all those thoughts which were not spent upon God, to be fruitless, Psalms 146:4. "In that very day his thoughts perish." I may allude to it in this sense—all worldly, vain thoughts, in that day of death perish, and come to nothing! What good will the whole globe of the world do at such a time? Those who have reveled out their thoughts in impertinences, will but be the more disquieted; it will cut them to the heart, to think how they have spun a fool's thread! A Scythian captain having, for a draught of water, yielded up the city, cried out, "What have I lost!" So will it be with that man when he comes to die, who has spent all his meditations upon the world; he will say, "What have I lost! I have lost heaven, I have betrayed my soul!" And should not the consideration of this fix our minds upon the thoughts of God and glory? All other meditations are fruitless; like a piece of ground which has much cost laid out upon it—but it yields no crop.

5. Holy meditation is never lost. God has a pen to write down all our good thoughts, Malachi 3:5. "A book of remembrance was written for those who thought upon his name." God has all our meditations written in his book. God pens our closet devotion.

6. See the blessedness affixed to the meditating Christian. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." Psalms 1:1-2. Say not it is hard to meditate. It brings much blessedness. Lycurgus could draw the Lacedemonians to do anything, by giving them rewards. If ungodly men can meditate with delight on that which will make them cursed; shall not we meditate on that which will make us blessed? nay, in the Hebrew it is in the plural, blessednesses, we shall have one blessedness upon another.

7. Delightful meditation in God's law is the best way for a man to prosper in his estate. Joshua 1:8. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth—but you shall meditate therein; for then shall you make your way prosperous." I leave this to their consideration who are desirous to thrive in the world; and let this serve for a motive to meditation. The next thing remaining, is to lay down some rules about meditation.

XVIII. RULES concerning Meditation.

Rule 1. When you go to meditate—be very **SERIOUS** in the work. Let there be a deep impression upon your soul. That you may be serious in meditation, do these two things:

1. Get yourself into a posture of holy reverence. Over-awe your heart with the thoughts of God, and the incomprehensibleness of his Majesty. When you are at the work of meditation, remember you are now to deal with **GOD**. If an angel from heaven did appoint to meet you at such an hour, would you not prepare yourself with all seriousness and solemnity, to meet him? Behold—a greater than an angel is here; the God of glory is present! He has an eye upon you, he sees the state of your heart when you are alone. Think with yourself, O Christian, when you are going to meditate—that you are now to deal with him in private—before whom the angels adore, and the devils tremble! Think with yourself, that you are now in his presence before whom you must shortly stand and all the world with you—to receive their everlasting sentence. You must die, and how soon you know not; from the closet to the tribunal.

2. That your heart may be serious in meditation, labor to possess your thoughts with the solemnity and greatness of the work you are now going about. As David said concerning his building a house for God—the work is great, 1 Chronicles 29:1. So it may be said of meditation—the work is great, and we had need gather and rally together all the powers of the soul to the work! If you were to set about a work wherein your life was concerned, how serious would you be in the thoughts of it? In the business of meditation, your soul is concerned; eternity depends upon it! If you neglect it, or are slight in it—it will have eternal consequences. If Archimedes was so serious in drawing his mathematical line, that he minded not the sacking of the city; O how serious should a Christian be when he is drawing a line for eternity! When you are going to meditate, you are going to the greatest work in the world!

Rule. 2. READ before you meditate. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8. Read before you meditate. The Law must be in Joshua's mouth; he was first to read--and then meditate.

"Give attendance to reading," 1 Timothy 4:13. Then it follows, "meditate on these things," verse 15, 1 Timothy 4:15. Reading furnishes the mind with matter. Reading is the oil which feeds the lamp of meditation. Reading helps to rectify meditation. Augustine well says that, "meditation without reading will be erroneous." Naturally, the mind is defiled, and will be minting thoughts; and how many untruths does it mint! Therefore first read in the book of the Law—and then meditate! Be sure your meditations are grounded upon Scripture.

There is a strange Utopia in the imaginations of some men; they take those for true principles, which are false; and if they mistake their principles they must needs be wrong in their meditations. Thus the mind having laid in wrong principles--the meditation must be erroneous, and a man at last goes to hell upon a mistake! Therefore be sure you read before you meditate--that you may say, "it is written!" Meditate on nothing but what you believe to be a truth; believe nothing to be a truth, but what can show its letters of credence from the Word.

Observe this rule--let reading usher in meditation. Reading without meditation—is unfruitful! Meditation without reading—is dangerous!

Rule 3. Do not multiply the subjects of meditation. That is, meditate not on too many things at once; like the bird that hops from one branch to another, and stays in no one place. Single out rather some one topic at a time, which you will meditate upon. Too much variety distracts. One truth driven home by meditation, will most greatly affect the heart! A man that is to shoot, sets up one target which he aims at to hit. When you are to shoot your mind above the world by meditation, set one thing before you to hit! If you are to meditate on the passion of Christ, let that take up all thoughts! If you are to meditate upon death, confine your thoughts to that. One subject at a time is enough. Martha while she was cumbered about many things, neglected the one needful thing; so while our meditations are taken up about many things, we lose that one thing which should affect our hearts, and do us more good. Drive but one wedge of meditation at a time—but be sure you drive it home to the heart. Those who aim at a whole flock of birds hit none. Several medicines taken together, the one hinders the virtue of the other; whereas a single medicine might do good.

Rule 4. To meditation, join EXAMINATION. When you have been meditating on any spiritual subject, put an enquiry to your soul, and though it is short, let it be serious. "O my soul, is it thus with you—or not?" When you have been meditating about the fear of God—that it is the "beginning of wisdom"—make an enquiry, "O my soul, is this fear planted in your heart? You are almost come to the end of your days, are you yet come to the beginning of wisdom?" When you have been meditating on Christ, his virtues, his privileges, make an enquiry, "O my soul, do you love him who is so lovely; and are you ingrafted into him? Are you a living branch of this living vine?" When you have been meditating upon the graces of the Spirit, make an enquiry, "O my soul, are you adorned as the bride of Christ with this chain of pearl? Have you your certificate for heaven ready? Will my graces be to seek, when I should have them to show?" Thus should a Christian in his retirements, parley often with his heart. For lack of this examination, meditation evaporates and comes to nothing. For lack of examination while in meditation, many are strangers to their own hearts; though they live known to others, they die unknown to themselves. Meditation is like a telescope by which we contemplate heavenly objects; but self-examination is like a looking glass by which we see into our own souls, and can judge how it is with us. Meditation joined with examination, is like the sun on the dial, which shows how the day goes, it shows us how our hearts stand affected to spiritual things.

Rule 5. Seal up meditation with PRAYER. Pray over your meditations. Prayer sanctifies everything; without prayer they are but unhallowed meditations. Prayer fastens meditation upon the soul. Prayer is a tying a knot at the end of meditation—so that it does not slip. Pray that God will keep those holy meditations in your mind forever, that the savor of them may abide upon your hearts, 1 Chronicles 29:18. "O Lord, keep this desire in the hearts of your people forever, and keep their hearts loyal to you." So let us pray, that when we have been musing on heavenly things, and our hearts have waxed hot within us, we may not cool into a sinful tepidness and lukewarmness—but that our affections may be as the lamp of the sanctuary—always burning.

Rule 6. The last rule is, let meditation be reduced to PRACTICE. Live out your meditation. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8. Meditation and practice, like two sisters, must go hand in hand. Cassian says, that "the contemplative life cannot be perfected without the practice." We read that the angels had wings, and hands under their wings, Ezekiel 1:8. It may be an emblem of this truth; Christians must not only fly upon the wing of meditation—but they must be active in obedience, they must have hands under their wings! The end of meditation is action. We must not only meditate in God's law—but walk in his law, Deuteronomy 28:9. Without this, we are like those Gnostics, who had much knowledge—but were licentious in their lives. Christians must be like the sun, which does not only send forth heat—but goes its circuit round the world. It is not enough that the affections are heated by meditation—but we must go our circuit too, that is, move regularly in the sphere of obedience. After warming at the fire of meditation, we must be fitter for work. Meditation is the life of piety; and practice is the life of meditation. It is said in the honor of Gregory Nazianzen, that he lived out his own sermons. So a godly Christian must live out his own meditations. For instance:

1. When you have been meditating on sin, which, for its bitterness, is compared to grapes of gall; for its damnableness to poison of asps, and you begin to burn in a holy indignation against sin—now put your meditations in practice—give sin a bill of divorce, Job 11:14. "If iniquity is in your

hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in your tabernacles."

2. When you have been meditating on the graces of the Spirit, let the verdure and luster of these graces be seen in you. Live these graces. Meditate, "that you may observe and do." It was Paul's counsel to Timothy, "Exercise yourself to godliness." Meditation and practice are like a pair of compasses, the one part of the compass fixes upon the center, and the other part goes round the circumference. Just so, a Christian by meditation fixes upon God as the center, and by practice goes around the circumference of the commandments. A man who has let his thoughts run out upon riches, will not only have them in the notion—but will endeavor to get riches. Let your meditation be practical. When you have been meditating upon a promise, live upon a promise. When you have been meditating on a good conscience, never leave until you can say as Paul, "Herein I exercise myself, to have a good conscience," Acts 24:16. Beloved, here lies the very essence of true religion. That this rule may be well observed, consider,

1. It is only the practical part of religion, which will make a man blessed. Meditation is a beautiful flower—but Rachel said to her husband: "Give me children or I die," Genesis 30:1. So, If meditation is barren, and does not bring forth the child of obedience—it will die and come to nothing!

2. If when you have meditated in God's law, you do not obey his law, you will come short of those who have come short of heaven. It is said of Herod, Mark 6:20, "He did many things;" he was in many things a practicer of John's ministry. Those who meditate in God's law, and do not practice it, are not so good as Herod. Nay, they are no better than the devil; he knows much—but still he is a devil.

3. Meditation without practice will increase a man's condemnation. If a father writes a letter to his son, and the son shall read over this letter, and study it—yet not do as his father writes, this would be an aggravation of his fault, and would but provoke his father the more against him. Thus when we have meditated upon the evil of sin, and the beauty of holiness—yet we do not eschew the one, nor espouse the other, it will but incense the divine Majesty so much the more against us, and we shall "be beaten with many stripes."

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