

Meditating on the Scriptures

by Charles H. Spurgeon

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was perhaps the most widely known minister in recent church history. Known as “the Prince of Preachers,” Spurgeon preached to over 5,000 people at every service of the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for more than thirty years. He wrote or edited more than 200 complete books and thousands of his sermons have been reprinted. His writings are timeless, because they are solidly based on the scriptures, making them as vivid and soul uplifting as when they were penned nearly a century ago.

It is well to meditate upon the things of God, because we thus get the real nutriment out of them. A man who hears many sermons, is not necessarily well-instructed in the faith. *We may read so many religious books, that we overload our brains, and they may be unable to work under the weight of the great mass of paper and of printer’s ink. The man who reads but one book, and that book his Bible, and then meditates much upon it, will be a better scholar in Christ’s school than he who merely reads hundreds of books, and meditates not at all.*

Truth is something like the cluster of the vine: if you would have wine from it, you must bruise it; you must press and squeeze it many times. The bruisers’ feet must come down joyfully upon the bunches, or else the juice will not flow; and they must leap, and leap, and leap again, and well tread the grapes, or else much of the precious liquid will be wasted. You must, by the feet of meditation, tread the clusters of truth, would you get the wine of consolation therefrom.

Our bodies are not supported by merely taking food into the mouth, but the process which really supplies the muscle, and the nerve, and the sinew, and the bone, is the process of digestion. It is by digestion that the outward food becomes assimilated with inner life. And so it is with our souls; they are not nourished merely by what we hear by going hither, and thither, and listening awhile to this, and then to that, and then to the other. Hearing, reading, marking, and learning, all require inwardly digesting; and the inward digesting of the truth lies in the meditating upon it.

Why is it that some people are always in a place of worship, and yet they are not holy, though they make some slight advances in the divine life? It is because they neglect their closets. They love the wheat, but they do not grind it; they would have the corn, but they will not go forth into the fields to gather it; the fruit hangs upon the tree, but they will not pluck it; the water flows at their feet, but they will not stoop to drink of it.

Another note in the praise of this most blessed, but much-neglected duty, is that it fixes the truth upon the memory. You complain of short memories; you say that what you have heard you can scarcely remember to another day. If thy paint be thin, and thou canst not make thy picture stand out in glowing colours, lay on many coats of thy paint, and so wilt thou do what thou wantest. If thy memory will not retain the truth the first time, then think it over, and over, and over again, and so, by having these several coats of paint, as it were, the whole matter shall abide.

Complain not, then, of thy memory, complain of thyself if thou art not given to meditation. Let thy closet rebuke thee because thou hast not been oftener there, if thy memory be frail. Whereas another man may do with less meditation, if thou sayest thy memory is weak, the more reason why thou shouldest be a longer time, and oftener with thy God in secret. All want (lack) this, but thou needest it more than others; see thou to it, then, that thou neglected not this duty. For getting the nourishment out of truth, and moreover, for preserving, for salting down the truth for future use, employ much meditation. Meditation clippeth the wings of thoughts, which otherwise would fly away at the first clapping of the world's hands. Thou shalt thus keep thy prey, as it were, surrounded and entangled in a net, else it might escape thee; thy meditation shall hold it fast until thou needest it.

Yet further, meditation is of great value in opening up truth and leading us into its secrets. There is some gold to be found on the surface of this land of Ophir, the Book of God. There are some precious jewels which may be discovered even by the wayfaring man, but the mass of the gold is hidden in the bowels of the earth; and he who would be rich in these treasures, must dig into Scripture as one who seeketh for choice pearls. Thou must go down into its depths, and thou must rummage there until thou gettest at last at the treasure.

Truth is sometimes like a flint, which, when it is smitten the first time yieldeth not; but at last one happy blow of the hammer shall make it fly to shivers. You will find it the same with gospel doctrine, that you want to understand but cannot. There is some difficulty you cannot surmount. Meditation comes and gives one stroke after another with all the weight of prayer and of thoughtfulness, but it stirs not; till at last our diligence is rewarded, and we see the whole mass of masonry which reason had piled together of fabulous traditions, cometh tumbling down; the foundation is discovered, and the truth made clear to our apprehension in a moment.

You remember the story of the great philosopher who had been attempting to discover how much alloy there was in the king's crown, but who could find no way of doing it. By day and by night he pondered it; nay, at night when he slept, his daydreams did but come to him again; but on a sudden, when he was in the bath, he sprang up and wrapped his garments about him, and ran through the Street, crying out, "Inveni, Inveni," "I have found it! I have found it!" And one of these days, Christian, when you are puzzling over some doctrine which you feel must be true, but which you cannot grasp, you will spring upon your feet when God the Holy Spirit has revealed the truth to you, and you will cry, "I have found it! I have found it!" and great will be your joy at the discovery. Cultivate much, then, the habit of retirement and meditation, because of the way in which it opens up the truth.

But perhaps, after all, the best reason, at least the best to clench all the other reasons I have given, why we should spend much time in meditation, is, because meditation then becomes easier to us. I never did light an oven-fire in my life, but I have heard that sometimes when a baker goes to light a coal-oven, if his fuel be a little damp, he gets no blaze; but after the fire is once up, then he may throw in what he will, and everything is speedily consumed by the vehement heat. So sometimes you and I feel our hearts to be like cold ovens, and we try to put some fresh truth in, but it will not burn. But ah! when the heart gets hot and the fire is roaring, then even such damp material as I am able to give you on Sabbath-days will burn right well, and the feeble words of a poor servant of God will make your hearts hot within you.

We can meditate better after we have addicted ourselves to a meditative frame. When we have mused a little, then the fire begins to burn; and you will perceive, that as the fire burns, meditation gets easier, and then the heart gets warm; and oh! what holy affections, what blessed excitements those have who are much alone with Christ!

Such a man never has a cold heart or a slack hand who is much in meditation with his Lord Jesus; his heart comes to be like a mass of molten lead, and ere long he verifies the experience of the Psalmist, and can make my text his own. "Then spake I with my tongue," He cannot help it, for this lava will soon be running over in burning hot words; and if this man should be a preacher, he will preach with holy power; his heart being hot, his words will burn their way into his hearers' hearts. Nor will it end there, but this hot heart will soon make a hot hand, and the man who once has his soul full of Christ will not have his hand empty for Christ. Now he will work; now he will preach for Christ; now he will pray, now he will plead with sinners; now he will be in earnest; now he will weep; now he will agonize; now he will wrestle with the angel, and now he will prevail; for, as the fire burneth, his whole being gets into a glow; and the man, like a pillar of fire, warms those who are found about him, burns his way to the glory of success, and gives his Master fresh renown.

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