

## A CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT OR, A TREATISE CONCERNING MEDITATION

*And in his law doth he meditate day and night.*—PSA. 1:2.

Having led you through the Chamber of Delight, I will now bring you into the Withdrawing Room of Meditation. ‘In his law doth he meditate day and night.’

### CHAPTER I

#### *The Opening of the Words, and the Proposition Asserted.*

Grace breeds delight in God, and delight breeds meditation. A duty wherein consists the essentials of religion, and which nourisheth the very life-blood of it; and that the psalmist may show how much the godly man is habituated and inured to this blessed work of meditation, he subjoins, ‘In his law doth he meditate day and night’; not but that there may be sometimes intermission: God allows time for our calling, he grants some relaxation; but when it is said, the godly man meditates day and night, the meaning is, frequently: he is much conversant in the duty. It is a command of God to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). The meaning is, not that we should be always praying, as the Eutyches held, but that we should every day set some time apart for prayer: so Drusius and others interpret it. We read in the old law it was called the continual sacrifice (Num. 28:24), not that the people of Israel did nothing else but sacrifice, but because they had their stated hours, every morning and evening they offered, therefore it was called the continual sacrifice: thus the godly man is said to meditate day and night, that is, he is often at this work, he is no stranger to meditation.

DOCTRINE: The proposition that results out of the text is this, *That a good Christian is a meditating Christian,*

‘I will meditate in thy precepts’ (Psa. 119:15). ‘Meditate upon these things’ (1 Tim. 4:15). Meditation is the chewing upon the truths we have heard: the beasts in the old law that did not chew the cud were unclean: the Christian that doth not by meditation chew the cud, is to be accounted unclean. Meditation is like the watering of the seed, it makes the fruits of grace to flourish.

For the illustration of the point, there are several things to be discussed. First, I shall show you *what meditation is*. Second, That meditation is a *duty*. Third, The difference between meditation and *memory*. Fourth, The difference between meditation and *study*. Fifth, The *subject* of meditation. Sixth, The *necessity* of meditation.

## CHAPTER 2

### *Showing the Nature of Meditation.*

If it be inquired what meditation is, I answer, *meditation is the soul’s retiring of itself, that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections.* This description hath three branches.

1. *Meditation is the soul’s retiring of itself;* a Christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock up himself from the world. The world spoils meditation; ‘Christ went apart into the mount to pray’ (Matt. 14:23), so, go apart when you are to meditate; ‘Isaac went out to meditate in the field’ (Gen. 24:63), he sequestered and retired himself that he might take a walk with God by meditation. Zacchaeus had a mind to see Christ, and he got out of the crowd, ‘He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him’ (Luke 19:3, 4): so, when we would see God, we must get out of the crowd of worldly business; we must climb up into the tree by retiredness of meditation, and there we shall have the best prospect of heaven. The world’s music will either play us asleep, or

distract us in our meditations. When a mote is gotten into the eye, it hinders the sight; when worldly thoughts, as motes, are gotten into the mind, which is the eye of the soul, it cannot look up so steadfastly to heaven by contemplation. Therefore, as when Abraham went to sacrifice, 'he left his servant and the ass at the bottom of the hill' (Gen. 22:5), so, when a Christian is going up the hill of meditation, he should leave all secular cares at the bottom of the hill, that he may be alone, and take a turn in heaven. If the wings of the bird are full of slime, she cannot fly: meditation is the wing of the soul; when a Christian is beslimed with earth, he cannot fly to God upon this wing. St Bernard, when he came to the church door, used to say, 'Stay here, all my worldly thoughts, that I may converse with God in the temple': so say to thyself, 'I am going now to meditate, O all ye vain thoughts stay behind, come not near.' When thou art going up the mount of meditation, take heed the world doth not follow thee, and throw thee down from the top of this pinnacle. This is the first thing, the soul's retiring of itself; lock and bolt the door against the world.

2. The second thing in meditation is *a serious and solemn thinking upon God*. The Hebrew word 'to meditate,' signifies with intenseness to recollect and gather together the thoughts: meditation is not a cursory work, to have a few transient thoughts of religion; like the dogs of Nile that lap and away; but there must be in meditation a fixing the heart upon the object, a steeping the thoughts; carnal Christians are like quicksilver which cannot be made to fix; their thoughts are roving up and down, and will not fix; like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere. David was a man fit to meditate, 'O God, my heart is fixed' (Psa. 108:1). In meditation there must be a staying of the thoughts upon the object; a man that rides post through a town or village, he minds nothing; but an artist or limner that is looking on a curious piece, views the whole draught and portraiture of it, he observes the symmetry and proportion, he minds every shadow and colour. A carnal, flitting Christian is like the traveller, his thoughts ride post, he minds nothing of God; a wise Christian is like the artist, he views with seriousness, and ponders the things

of religion, 'But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2:19).

3. The third thing in meditation is *the raising of the heart to holy affections*. A Christian enters into meditation, as a man enters into the bath, that he may be healed. Meditation heals the soul of its deadness and earthliness; but more of this after.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *Proving Meditation to be a Duty.*

Meditation is a duty lying upon every Christian, and there is no disputing our duty. Meditation is a duty, 1. Imposed. 2. Opposed.

1. *Meditation is a duty imposed*; it is not arbitrary: the same God who hath bid us believe, hath bid us meditate: 'This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night' (Josh. 1:8). These words, though spoken to the person of Joshua, yet they concern everyone; as the promise made to Joshua concerned all believers (Josh. 1:5), compared with Hebrews 13:5. So this precept made to the person of Joshua, 'Thou shalt meditate in this book of the law,' takes in all Christians; it is the part of an hypocrite to enlarge the promise, and to strengthen the precept; 'thou shalt meditate in this book of the law'; the word 'thou' is indefinite, and reacheth every Christian; as God's word doth direct, so his will must enforce obedience.

2. *Meditation is a duty opposed*. We may conclude it is a good duty, because it is against the stream of corrupt nature; as he said, you may know that religion is right which Nero persecutes; so you may know that is a good duty which the heart opposeth. We shall find naturally a strange averseness from meditation. We are swift to hear, but slow to meditate. To think of the world, if it were all day long, is delightful; but as for holy meditation, how doth the heart wrangle and quarrel with this duty; it is doing of penance; now truly, there needs no other reason to prove a duty to be good, than the reluctancy of a carnal heart. To instance in the duty of self-denial, 'Let a man deny himself' (Matt. 16:24), self-denial is

as necessary as heaven, but what disputes are raised in the heart against it? What! to deny my reason, and become a fool that I may be wise; nay, not only to deny my reason, but my righteousness? What, to cast it overboard, and swim to heaven upon the plank of Christ's merits? This is such a duty that the heart doth naturally oppose, and enter its dissent against. This is an argument to prove the duty of self-denial good; just so it is with this duty of meditation; the secret antipathy the heart hath against it, shows it to be good; and this is reason enough to enforce meditation.

## CHAPTER 4

### *Showing How Meditation Differs from Memory.*

The memory (a glorious faculty), which Aristotle calls the soul's scribe, sits and pens all things that are done. Whatsoever we read or hear, the memory doth register; therefore, God doth all his works of wonder that they may be had in remembrance. There seems to be some analogy and resemblance between meditation and memory. But I conceive there is a double difference.

1. *The meditation of a thing hath more sweetness in it than the bare remembrance.* The memory is the chest or cupboard to lock up a truth, meditation is the palate to feed on it; the memory is like the ark in which the manna was laid up, meditation is like Israel's eating of manna. When David began to meditate on God, it was 'sweet to him as marrow' (Psa. 63:5, 6). There is as much difference between a truth remembered and a truth meditated on, as between a cordial in a glass, and a cordial drunk down.

2. *The remembrance of a truth without the serious meditation of it will but create matter of sorrow another day.* What comfort can it be to a man when he comes to die, to think he remembered many excellent notions about Christ, but never had the grace so to meditate on them, as to be transformed into them? A sermon remembered, but not ruminated, will only serve to increase our condemnation.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Showing, How Meditation Differs from Study.*

The student's life looks like meditation, but doth vary from it. Meditation and study differ three ways.

1. They differ *in their nature*. Study is a work of the brain, meditation of the heart; study sets the invention on work, meditation sets the affection on work.

2. They differ *in their design*. The design of study is notion, the design of meditation is piety: the design of study is the finding out of a truth, the design of meditation is the spiritual improvement of a truth; the one searcheth for the vein of gold, the other digs out the gold.

3. They differ *in the issue and result*. Study leaves a man never a whit the better; it is like a winter sun that hath little warmth and influence: meditation leaves one in a holy frame: it melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Showing the Subjects of Meditation.*

The fourth particular to be discussed is the subject matter of meditation; what a Christian should meditate upon. I am now gotten into a large field, but I shall only glance at things; I shall but do as the disciples, pluck some ears of corn as I pass along.

Some may say, 'Alas, I am so barren I know not what to meditate upon.' To help Christians therefore in this blessed work, I shall show you some choice select matter for meditation. There are fifteen things in the law of God which we should principally meditate upon.