

***"I will meditate in thy precepts,
and have respect unto thy ways."***

Psalm 119:15

Our *rejoicing in the testimonies of God* will naturally flow in an habitual *meditation in them*. (Verse 97. Ps. i. 1.) The thoughts follow the affections. The carnal man can never be brought to this resolution. Having no spiritual taste, he has no ability for spiritual *meditation*. Indeed many sincere Christians, through remaining weakness and depravity, are too often reluctant to it. They are content with indolent reading: and, with scarcely a struggle or a trial, yield themselves up to the persuasion, that they are unable sufficiently to abstract their minds for this blessed employment. But let the trial prove the work. Perseverance will accomplish the victory over mental instability, and the spiritual difficulty will give way to prayer, "Lord! help me." The fruitfulness of this employment will soon be manifest. Does it not "stir up the gift of God that is in us" (2 Tim. i. 6), and keep the energies of the heart in a wakeful posture of conflict and resistance? Besides this, it is the digestive faculty of the soul, which converts the word into real and proper nourishment: so that this revolving of a single verse in our minds is often better than the mere reading of whole chapters. "Thy words were found, and *I did eat them*; and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart."¹ Thus the mind becomes the instrument of faith and love--of joy and strength.

But this meditation not only includes the stated times of thought, but the train of holy thoughts, that pass through the mind during the busy hours of the day. This maintains an habitual flow of spiritual desires, and excites the flame of love within, till at length the Psalmist's resolution becomes the inwrought habit of our minds--"*I will meditate in thy precepts*."

Can we want a subject for meditation, if indeed the salvation of Jesus has been made known to our souls? While musing upon the glorious theme, does not "the fire burn" (Ps. xxxix. 3; and comp. xlv. 1) within, as if our hearts were touched with a live coal from the altar of God? Chide then, believer, thy dull and sluggish spirit, that suffers the precious manna to lie ungathered upon the ground, that is slow to entertain these heavenly thoughts, or rather that heavenly guest, whose peculiar office it is to "help our infirmities" (Rom. viii. 26), and especially to "take of Christ's, and show it unto us." (John, xvi. 14, 15.)

The exercise, however, of this, as of every other duty, may prove a barren form, that imparts neither pleasure nor profit.² Let each of us then ask--"What distinct experimental benefit have I received from the word? Do I devour to read it with prayerful meditation,

1 Jer. xv. 16. "Meditation is that exercise of mind, whereby it recalls a known truth, as some kinds of creatures do their food, to be ruminated upon, until the nutritious parts are extracted, and fitted for the purposes of life."--Bishop Horne on this verse.

2 If a chapter be read with the eye merely, while the mind remains inattentive, and the book be shut as soon as the chapter is finished, and thus, what has been read immediately escape the memory; what is there to surprise, if, after the whole Bible has been several times read through, we discover in ourselves no increase of piety and devotion?--Professor Francke.

until I find my heart filled with it?

But this communing with the word is not for contemplation, but for practice. (Josh. i. 8.) By *meditating on God's precepts*, we learn to *have respect unto his ways--carefully "pondering the path of our feet,"* that we "turn not aside." (Prov. iv. 26, 27.) "*Thy loving-kindness is before mine eyes; and I have walked in thy truth.*" (Ps. xxvi. 3.) "My foot, saith Job, "hath held his steps; his ways have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; *I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.*" (Job, xxiii. 11, 12.)