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SESSION 3 | MEDITATION

I. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to know a lot about God and still not know God. So, when it comes to spiritual formation, the key to spiritual formation is to "*Keep your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*" – Proverbs 4:23

The Parable of the Sower:

- **Mark 4:23,** "Pay attention to **what you hear**; with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you…"

- **Luke 8:18:** Then, Luke records that same Parable and gives this warning: "Take care then **how you hear**, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

Spiritual Hearing: Neither Mechanical nor Neutral

A. The Path–the birds swoop it away

B. The good soil–produces 100 fold

Question: How do we alter the condition of the soil?

Meditation:

- Meaning of Meditation

- Hindrances to it

- Its Practice

II. MEDITATION'S MEANING

Meditation can be understood in various ways, Bingham defines it as "directing one's attention toward God and his promises as revealed in Scripture with the aim of stirring up God-honoring affections" (131).

To meditate is to engage the mind and the heart:

- **follow Paul** to: "*think about godly things*" (Phil 4:8)
- **To follow Mary** in "*treasuring up*" God's promises and "*pondering them in your heart*" (Luke 2:19),
- To follow the **Colossians** in "*setting the mind on things above, and not things on earth.*"
- And to **follow Timothy** as Paul instructed him to "*Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything.*"

Other Texts:

- *"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night" (Josh. 1:8)*
- *"His delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2)*
- *"Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119:48)*
- *"My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I might meditate on your word" (PS. 119:!48 NASB)*
- "*I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands*" *(Ps. 143:5)*
- "*Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*" *(Rom. 8:5)*
- "*Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2).*

A. Meditation is Mental Work

One Puritan writer referred to the process of meditation as the "*bending of the mind upon some spiritual subject.*"

Isaiah 1:18–"*Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as scarlet, they shall become like wool.*"

- Why is this text here? Why did God say this?
- What significance is the color comparison? ["Sins are scarlet, and shall be white"]
- How does this happen for us?
- What is the result of His death?

a. Mental Work Leads to Heart Work

It also asks:

- What do I learn about the Heart of God, here?
- What do I learn about my relation to this God?
- Does this truth make any difference to me today? In what ways?
- Should my heart rejoice in this truth? Does it? If not, what do I need to do?

b. Meditation can be compared to embers in a fireplace

Isaac Ambrose: *"Meditation is as the bellows of the soul, that doth kindle and inflame holy affections."*

Thomas Watson: *"The reason we come away so cold from reading the word is that we do not warm ourselves at the fire of meditation.*"

"The real significance of meditation lies in its capacity to transform mere thoughts about God and the things of God into heartfelt, soul-stirring, life-transforming convictions about the same." (136)

III. HINDRANCES

1. **Our View of Discipleship is Often Too Academically Focused.**

2. **We read God's Word in order to "learn something new" instead of God to encounter God speaking through it.**

   Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that, "It is not necessary that we should discover new ideas in our meditation. Often this only diverts us and feeds our vanity. It is sufficient if the Word, as we read and understand it, penetrates and dwells within us….(as it) follows us for a long time, sticks in our mind, occupies, disturbs, or delights us, without our ability to do anything about it, so in meditation God's Word seeks to enter in and remain with us. It strives to stir us, to work and operate in us, so that we shall not get away from it the whole day long. Then it will do its work in us, often without our being conscious of it."

   Thomas Manton: "the end of study is information, but the end of meditation is practice, or a work upon the affections."

3. **Need To Slow Down**

   Thomas Manton: "Meditate upon the word: do not study the word in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection; but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well chewed and digested. If you would have it turn into good blood and spirits, you must follow it close till it settles into some affection."

IV. PRACTICE

Practical Suggestions:

- **Don't overthink it!**

- **Here's the plan:** get a predictable place and time, armed with a Pen, Paper, and a Bible (maybe coffee), and do some hard thinking about this from various angles.

We ask Application-Oriented Questions of the text:

How am I to respond to this text? What would God have me to do as a result of my encounter with this part of the word?"

1. What does this passage reveal that **I should believe about God?**
2. What does this text reveal that **I should praise** or thank or trust God for?
3. What does this text reveal that **I should pray about** for myself or others?
4. What does this text reveal that **I should have a new attitude** about?
5. What does this passage reveal that **I should do** for the sake of Christ, others, or myself?

"If thou wouldest have:

- thy understanding enlightened with the knowledge of God,

- thy affections inflamed with the love of God,

- thy heart established with the promise of God, thy solitariness cheered up with the company of God,

- thy afflictions mitigated with the comforts of God,

- and if though wouldn't have thy thoughts, words and works regulated by the command of God,

- pray and consider, pray and meditate." (160).

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