

The Importance and Duty of Meditating on the Word of God

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*“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth: but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that (in order that) thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: for then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success.”
(Joshua 1:8)*

God was not here giving Joshua mere good advice which he would be free to heed or not as he might desire, but instead He was giving him a commandment which he was to “obey,” and that “day and night,” i.e. constantly. And this commandment was not for Joshua alone but for you and me and every other servant and follower of the Lord as well, for “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4) and obedience. God told Jeremiah in 7:23, “Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.” God expects and demands that we shall be an obedient people, keeping (observing and practicing) whatsoever He has commanded us. We profess to have received Him as our “Lord and Saviour” and therefore we are to look to Him at all times and in all things for His directions as to what He would have us do or refrain from doing. “We are not our own, we have been bought with a price” and are therefore to “glorify God.” As our Creator and Lord He has the right to command us what He will, and it is ours to obey His will gladly and cheerfully.

Joshua, great commander of Israel that he was, was to be guided and governed wholly by “This Book of the law.” He had received his orders from God through “this Book,” and he was to regulate his conduct by it. “The Lord said unto Moses, Write this in a book and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua” (Ex. 17:14). From this we see that the Book was prepared for Joshua, and now he is to fulfill Its words. This Book of the law was to have absolute supremacy, and all Joshua’s actions were to be regulated by it. It is “the Book of the LAW” and as binding on us as on Joshua. It is more than good advice, for it is a law clothed with Divine authority, a Rule for us to walk by.

Once every seven years the whole Book of the law was to be read in the hearing of the entire congregation of Israel: “that they may hear, and learn to fear the Lord their God, and observe to do all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:10-14). This was the Book which was to regulate Joshua’s actions. God warned him that “This Book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth.” And this is God’s warning to us too, for no man is above the law of God, be he clothed with great power and authority, or one of the common people, all must be in subjection to the Divine law, and regulated by what is “written” if we would have the smile of God and prosper in whatsoever we do (Psa. 1:3).

“Thou shalt meditate therein day and night.” Most important as it is, meditation is a lost art today with multitudes of professing Christians. It is one of the most important means of grace and spiritual growth. It is not optional whether we obey or not but obligatory, something that God has “commanded” us to do. How about you? Have you obeyed this Divine “command”? Have you? How much time do you spend each day reading the Word of God, let alone meditating on it? Alas, in so many homes of professing Christians the Word of God receives scant attention, if indeed it be opened at all from day to day. At best many may hastily read a few verses of it after supper, then the Book is closed and laid on the table until the next night when perhaps a few more verses are thoughtlessly read. The usual excuse given by those who neglect it is that they are too busy with a multiplicity of duties and concerns of life for quiet and leisurely meditation. If this is your excuse then be sure you are acting in the energy of the flesh and are little better than a slave to it. You may have burdens but they are self-imposed ones if you have undertaken more than you ought to so that the needs of your soul are crowded out to the neglect of your eternal interests. If this is your case you will do well to “Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:5,7). “Christ’s yoke is easy and His burden light” (Matt. 11:30). The real reason is the deceit of your evil heart. It is not lack of time but lack of heart for the things of God. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6:21). Remember this, what most occupies the heart will engage the mind, for our thoughts always follow our affections. Even the least things are tedious and burdensome if we have no delight in them. It is not for lack of opportunity but of relish for the Word and a desire to please God that is the root of your trouble. Meditation on the Word was not a task but a joy to David, for he said “O how love I thy law, it is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97).

It is useless to plead your numerous obligations and heavy responsibilities, for God will not accept them. You certainly do not have more responsibility and heavier and more numerous burdens than had Joshua. If any might have had just reason to be excused from spending time in meditation it was Joshua, but even he was not permitted to neglect the one thing needful. “We cannot expect the God of truth to be with us if we neglect the truth of God.”

Nor is reading the Word and hearing it preached sufficient, we must “meditate” on some portion of it, going over it again and again in our minds. That is what deepens the impression, fastens the truth in our memory and sets us to work. Meditation is for the special purpose “that we may observe to do according to all that is written therein” and it is to be our constant duty “day and night.” If we are really desirous of pleasing our blessed Lord, and glorifying Him, then we will take pains to see to it that we familiarize ourselves with His Word and habitually ponder its holy precepts. The Psalmist said, “I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways (Psa. 119:15).

It is so easy to make ourselves think that we desire to please God in all things, but what evidence can we produce to prove that our desire is genuine? What pleases God is made known in His statutes, and it is by meditating on them that we come to understand them, have our consciences impressed by them. and our wills moved to obey them. What moved David to have respect for God’s commandments was his love for them, and if we have a real love for them we will endeavor constantly and earnestly to practice them.

We must not only approve God’s statutes, we must perform them. James 1:22 tells us we must be “doers of the Word.” “For then shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and then shalt thou have good success.” Yes, “then” and only then. If we expect success in our spiritual warfare we must walk in the path of God’s commandments as “obedient children.” How we need to meditate on the Word in order to bring our hearts to a greater detestation of sin and a greater care to please God.

In closing, if we would prosper as Joshua did, we must act as he did.