

Class 3, How Christians Should Meditate on Providence

For our purposes tonight in this class, I will assume the following necessary items concerning the importance of Christian meditation:

1. The Bible teaches that Christians should meditate on Scriptural truths for the sake of our souls.
2. Meditation is deeper than reading or even memorizing; meditation soaks in the truth until the truth soaks into us.
3. As Christians, we should give ourselves to meditation concerning God and the truths of God as part of our discipleship and Christian growth.

John Flavel in his book on Providence has some good material concerning meditating on Providence.

THE DUTY AND METHOD OF MEDITATING ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE

See John Flavel's book on, "The Mystery of Providence" (numbers following quotes are page numbers in the book)

1. **The duty of meditating on God's providence** (and reasons for this duty to meditate on God's truth)

"It is the duty of the people of God to meditate upon performances of Providence for them, at all times, but especially in times of difficulty and trouble." 113

- Why especially during times of difficulty and trouble? Christians should meditate on God's truth about Providence during times of trouble, because this enables us to keep God-focused, drawing comfort and peace from the Lord during such times. In this way, we magnify the Lord even in our troubles.

"It is plain that this is our duty because the neglect of it is everywhere in Scripture condemned as sin." 113-114

"Without due observation of the works of Providence no praise can be rendered to God for any of them." 114

"Without meditation on God's providences, we would lose the benefit and usefulness of the works of God in providence." 115

- We should pay attention to this point! If we do not give proper intellectual and heart consideration to the truth of God, then we are missing what God wants us to understand, especially during times of trial. Trials open doors of opportunity for truth to go deeply into our hearts. If we do not meditate in such times, we miss our opportunity.

2. **How to meditate on God's providence**

BE WATCHFUL FOR PROVIDENCE IN YOUR SITUATION: "Labor to get as full and thorough a recognition as you are able of the providences of God concerning you from first to last." 117

BE AWARE OF YOUR LIMITATION OF PERCEPTION OF PROVIDENCE: “Providences in themselves are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the Word.” 122 / ACCEPT YOUR LIMITATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING: “Do not pray too curiously into the secrets of Providence, nor allow your shallow reason arrogantly judge and censure the designs of Providence.” 141

- Thus, it is important that we not assume that we rightly understand and perceive the true nature of things; we should not presume that the way we are thinking about something is absolutely true. We should leave room for growth of understanding. We should be humble. Then, we can exercise the virtues of patience and teachability.

CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SIN: “(Concerning God’s punishment/correction for sin) It is God’s usual way to visit the sins of His people with rods of affliction, and in this in mercy to their souls.” 125

- We particularly see this point made in Hebrews 12:5-11.

FOCUS ON GOD AS THE ONE IN CHARGE: “In all your reviews and observations of Providence, be sure that you eye God as the author and the One who orders them all” 128 (He refers to Proverbs 3:6) (Do not rejoice in pain, but rejoice in God who is working through your pain) (Do not complain or criticize God)

- If we do not logically and theologically understand this, then we will very likely be tempted to be bitter and angry, because we blame people and circumstances (and even God; blaming is always an exercise against God).

THINK ON GOD’S GREAT MERCIES AND GIFTS TO US IN CHRIST: “Why should Christians give up our joy in God on account of sad providences, when at the very worst and lowest ebb the saints have infinitely more cause to rejoice than to be cast down? There is more in one of our mercies to comfort us than in all our troubles to deject us.” 133

THINK ABOUT DEATH AND ETERNITY AND THE FULFILLMENT OF OUR JOY: “Dwell much upon the meditation of the Lord’s near approach, because when He comes all these things will seem but trifles to you.” 134

- Thinking about heaven and glorification will give us strength and courage to wait on the Lord and leave all with Him.

DO NOT GROW WEARY OF WAITING ON THE LORD: “If Providence delays the performance of any mercy to you (a mercy for which you have long waited and prayed), see to it that you do not give in to despair and despondence, nor grow weary of waiting upon God.” 138

- Despair is a type of unbelief; it fuels on doubt and dishonors God. It is natural to struggle, but do not give in to despair.

REMEMBER, MERCIES ARE NOT FAR OFF: “Expected mercies are never nearer than when the hearts and hopes of God’s people are lowest.” 140

PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

Some Practical Suggestions Concerning Meditation on Providence

1. I suggest that you keep a prayer log and record answers to prayer.
2. Also, keep a journal of Scriptures that you are reading (commands, directions, Psalms, and historical narratives), and write down how these Scriptures speak to your situation.
3. Make special note of the Scriptures that show God's providence in the narratives and address the issue of providence in life troubles and experience.
4. Review regularly the biblical promises of God to His people for comfort and assistance during hard times; claim every promise for you.
5. Write down every kindness that comes your way, especially good things that strangely and unexpectedly come from your pain.
6. Repent of sin in your life.
7. Enjoy sweet time of prayer with the Lord Jesus and fellowship with Him.
8. Regularly ponder God's promises concerning the end of your life and in heaven; think about what the Bible says about how this life's pain relates to your heavenly reward and glory.
9. Seek to bring glory to God by showing your witness to others in your trial.
10. Share with someone else what you are learning.
11. Cultivate absolute faith in the faithfulness of God; His wisdom prevails. Submit to God's will.

3. The advantages of meditating on providence

- 1) **COMFORT:** "What unspeakable comfort it is for a poor soul, that sees nothing but sin and vileness in itself, and at the same time sees with great esteem the value of the great God." 150

"What is there in all the world that can give a soul such joy and comfort as to find himself by everything set on and furthered in his way to heaven." 150

- There is nothing more comforting than to ponder and live on the fact that every single aspect of our lives is under God's control, who is working on and in all things to bring about our everlasting good, joy, and holiness.
- In an article by G. D. Watson entitled, "The Majesty of God in Providence" (published in the "Free Grace Broadcaster" Winter 2000), G. D. Watson says the following about how Christians should think about the providence of God:

"It is simply inconceivable (his argument is that the omnipresent and omniscient God could ever blunder in providence), and could we see it (providence) in its total reality, it (Providence) would crush our intellects with an overwhelming weight of sublimity...(following a short discussion about God's providence in creation and Scripture, he then deals with special providence as it is seen in God's watchful care over His people) On the silver pages of each swiftly passing day God is writing out His dealing with each of us in such accuracy and compassionate love, and patient, impartial wisdom. He balances need with supply, dovetails prayer to answer, interblends sorrow with joy, fear with hope, sweetly joins faith and fruition, sweetly joining the supernatural with the natural, and the motive of the heart with the reward

of the act. If we could see it all as an angel can discern it, the very sight would dazzle us into ecstasy.”

2) PROVIDENCE SQUASHES HEART ATHEISM: “Providence will overpower and suppress the natural atheism in the heart...There is a natural seed of atheism in the best of hearts, and this is very much nourished by passing a rash and false judgment upon the works of Providence.” 151

(1) As such, providence establishes conviction about God and the Christian life that will lead the believer to obedience, worship, and faithfulness.

(2) Providence exalts God in the heart, and it brings glory to God.

(3) Providence enables the believer to attack fear and anxiety.

3) G. D. Watson talks about the Christian thinking about the providence of God and how thinking about Providence develops other virtues in our lives:

“If we take time to think quietly over the daily dealings of God with us, and lovingly watch for every little symptom of God’s presence in us and around us, we will soon be astonished at the degree we will discover of His presence, and the perfection with which He weaves things together for our good. He never makes half a providence. You may rest assured that you are always enveloped in the presence of the Holy Spirit. He watches every movement of your inner being, and has His hand this very moment on everything in creation. He is incessantly adjusting causes to effects, and the inner spirit to the outer circumstance, and things near to things...many miles away. Nothing can be too small for His loving notice and superintendence. Let us watch for God in His daily dealings with us. The more thoughtfully we watch, the more we will see of Him. And the more we see, the more we will love Him.”

Final Thoughts on Practical Application

Think aright about God and His providential dealings with us in this life by including the following thoughts:

1. PROVIDENCE, SALVATION, AND ALL THINGS FOR GOOD: God’s watch care over His people throughout our lives on earth falls under the categorical heading of God’s salvation; this deals with God always working for the good of our souls in our earthly experience and sanctification. He cannot fail to accomplish His purpose of making us like Christ. This earthly journey and process relates to our eternal joy in perfection in heaven.
2. CHRISTIANS BEHIND ENEMY LINES: When we are saved by God’s grace in regeneration, we become strangers and aliens to this world and its inhabitants; thus, Christians always feel a bit out of sorts with this world, and we find that we are in contrast to all that the world loves and longs for, resulting in our separation from the world, loneliness in the world, and opposition against us by the world.
3. CHRISTIANS STILL EXPERIENCE SOME ASPECTS OF FALLENNESS: Furthermore, Christians, because we still live in a fallen world, experience all the sicknesses and sorrows that are incumbent upon this fallen and sinful world.

4. **THE ULTIMATE WEAVING FOR GOOD OF PROVIDENCE:** However, God has promised that He will (for our eternal good and His eternal glory) take all experiences in this life by His people (even the hard experiences) and through these things bring about our spiritual growth, eternal vision, and holy character.
5. **LIVE LIFE BEFORE GOD AND HAVE AN ETERNAL MINDSET:** It behooves the Christian to always and evermore live life in this world before God, so that we think about and relate to every aspect of life (especially the hard experiences of this life) to the person, redemption, and providential will and activity of God.
6. **LIVING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD'S PROMISES:** Thus, when live through pain and suffering, we must soak intellectually and emotionally in the promises of God, all of which are greater than our pain and suffering, and we must seek the presence of Christ in the Holy Spirit in our pain and suffering.