Christian Meditation

Phil. 4:8

Our text this morning implores the Christian to engage in a form of “meditation”.

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (NKJV)

The practice of meditation by Christians is not something you might hear frequently discussed. It may be that some Christians are simply not aware that they are commanded to meditate. It may be that some believe that meditation belongs solely to the eastern religions like Hinduism or Buddhism. But the Apostle Paul clearly teaches us to “meditate on these things”, and meditation is certainly a Biblical subject.

Gen 24:63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming.

Joshua was charged by God to meditate “day and night”. Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

The “blessed man” spoken of in Psalms chapter 1 is one who meditates. Psalm 1:1-2 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

David became wiser than his teacher through mediation. Psalm 119:99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies are my meditation.

Paul commanded Timothy to “meditate on these things”. 1 Tim, 4:15 “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.”

Although it is evident throughout scriptures that meditation is something that a Christian is expected to do, some questions may still come to mind.

a. What does meditation mean for the Christian?
   b. Why should we be concerned about making time to meditate?
   c. How should we meditate?
We hope to attempt to provide some answers to those questions in our lesson this morning.

**I. WHAT DOES MEDITATION MEAN FOR THE CHRISTIAN**

A. Let’s begin by addressing “**What meditation in the Bible is not**”.

   1. The kind practiced by many Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.), Sometimes referred to as “Transcendental Meditation” (TM).

      According to its advertisements, here are some of the ways TM will benefit individuals. It can improve your health, your self-image, your productivity, and heighten your intelligence and creativity without stress or tension? In essence it is a Hindu meditation technique that attempts to unite the person meditating with Brahman, the Hindu concept of God. Since TM is religious in nature, based upon Hinduism, consequently its theology is in direct contrast to Christianity. Its view of God reflects a denial of the infinite-personal God revealed in Scripture. Hindu’s believe that "God is found in two phases of reality: as a supreme being of absolute, eternal nature and as a personal God at the highest level of phenomenal creation!"

      Simply put its view of God and man is not in accord with the Bible. Scripture teaches that God is infinite while man is finite. Man can never become God or attain Godhood for he is part of God’s creation. Man is the creature. God is the creator. Although man is part of God’s creation, he is not to be identified with God. God, the creator, is a being separate from His creation. God is by nature eternal, whereas God’s creation is temporal (it came into being at a particular time). Man, the finite, will never become God, the infinite.

      I could go on, but suffice it to say that this type of meditation is **dangerous and actually opens up one’s mind for Satanic attack as it is found in New Age thinking.** It is absolutely not the meditation that Paul is speaking of.

A. Let’s talk now about “**What meditation in the Bible is**”.

Meditation means “**the act of focusing one’s thoughts: to ponder, think on, muse.**” Meditation consists of reflective thinking or contemplation, usually on a specific subject to discern its meaning or significance or a plan of action. Some synonyms would be contemplation, reflection, rumination, deep thinking, or remembering in the sense of keeping or calling something to mind for the purpose of consideration, reflection, or meditation. Compare for instance the following verses of Scripture:

*Psalm 63:6*  “When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches,”
Psalm 77:12  I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds.

Biblical meditation involves becoming detached from the controlling and hindering influences of the world and attached to the living God through Christ that we might, through faith and transformed values, experience the sufficiency of the Savior and reach out to a hurting world in need of the living Christ.

Biblical meditation is object oriented. It begins with reflective reading and rereading of the Word and is followed by reflection on what has been read and committed to memory. In Scripture, the word meditate is generally found with an object (God, His Word, or works, etc.) or in a context where the object of meditation is understood. In Scripture it does not mean to sit and ponder infinity or to empty the mind so some force can fill it by repeating some chant or mantra. Such is dangerous and opens the mind to demonic attack. Meditation in the Bible means reflective thinking on biblical truth so that God is able to speak to us through Scripture and through the thoughts that come to mind as we are reflecting on the Word, but that must also be filtered by the Word. The goal of Christian meditation is to internalize and personalize the Scripture so that its truth can affect how we think, our attitudes, and how we live, our actions.

The Objectives of Meditation

(1) Worship—It is designed to focus on the Lord and His works. Psalm. 27:4 “One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple”. It is a place and space in our lives for communion with God. It is a means of elevating the spiritual over the material world and the world of activity: the world of hustle and bustle and coming and going.

(2) Instruction—It is designed to improve our understanding of the Word and God’s ways as it applies to our lives Psalm119:27 “Make me understand the way of Your precepts; So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works”. In meditation we exchange our thoughts with God’s.

(3) Motivation or Encouragement— Josh. 1:7-8 “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”. It is designed to motivate and inspire us in service and courage for the works God has called us to do.

(4) Transformation— Rom. 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove
what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”. It is designed to transform and change our lives. In Joshua 1:8, just read earlier, God promised Joshua success as part of the fruit of his meditation on the Word, but this has nothing to do with the prosperity mentality of the positive thinking and eastern meditation that is so present today in New Age thinking where, through positive thinking, one is able to control his or her destiny. Rather this is the success of obedient and godly living which experiences God’s provision and deliverance from the enemies of this life. It is not a guarantee against trials and pain.

II. WHY SHOULD WE MEDITATE

A. Because of what the Bible is—Revelation 2 Tim. 3:16  “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. In the Bible God has spoken and through this book God reveals Himself, reveals who and what man is, and what His plan for man consists of. The Bible was given to us by God to be read and meditated on. Someone has said that “An unread Bible is like food that is refused, an unopened love letter, a buried sword, a road map not studied, a gold mine not worked.”

B. Because of what the meditation does—Transformation of the mind and life. The goal of the Christian is to become more like Christ and this requires a transformation. Using the words “meditate” and “remember”, which is sometimes used as a synonym for meditate, let’s note from Scripture some of the reasons we should meditate on the Word.

- **Rom 12:1** “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”. It renews or reprograms our minds, exchanges our ideas for God’s ideas, so we can begin to experience God’s ways. It’s the principle of GIGO or VIVO (garbage in, garbage out, or value in, value out).

- **Col 3:1-2** “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth”. It monitors what and how we are thinking and thus protects us against the thinking and actions of the world. Many of our problems are symptoms of underlying dynamic mental processes going on inside. Meditating on the Word when done properly is designed to expose an often unconscious network of defenses, anxieties, and sources of self-trust. It enables and motivates us to walk after or according to God’s plan and purposes rather than our own. Only when our minds are “set on things above” will we be successful in completing the transformation which includes “putting off the old man” and “putting on the new man”.

C. It is a source of joy and strength -- Isaiah 40:28-31 “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The
Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. 30Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint”. Surely this alone should motivate us to meditate more often!

1 Peter 5:7 “casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”

Peter tells us again in 1 Peter 1:3-5 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, 5who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Jesus himself tells us in John 10:28-29 “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. 29My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.” Do we understand what Jesus is telling us? He is saying that once we give our lives to Him He will never let us go. NEVER. It is only when turn our backs on him, when we refuse to give our lives to him, that we will run into trouble.

It should be readily apparent that a Christian has a wealth of joy and strength available.

III. HOW SHOULD WE MEDITATE

Many Christians fall because they meditate on the wrong things! Rom 8:5-8 “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Even those in the world know and understand that you cannot be a spiritual person if you dwell on carnal things.

The first step to proper meditation is to be selective in what you read and watch. We should be filling our minds with positive and spiritual thoughts if we really want to “renew the mind” and “be transformed”. Obviously the scriptures are always our primary source for meditation, but there are undoubtedly other sources that can be helpful if chosen carefully.
There are three things that must go together in biblical meditation: READING, REFLECTING, and RESPONDING. The ultimate purpose of these three leads to the three great purposes of Bible study:

- OBSERVATION—What does the text say?
- INTERPRETATION—What does the text mean?
- APPLICATION—How does the text apply to my life?

**Reading**

Careful reading for observation comes first. The word “read” or “reading” occurs 80 times in Scripture, 34 times in the New Testament. This involves the following:

1. **Read Reverently**, ever mindful that you are reading the Word of God. The Bible is God breathed and each word and sentence has a purpose and function. This means reading deliberately, slowly, and alertly, not mechanically or legalistically.

2. **Read Repeatedly**, going over and over the passage to observe more and more knowing that you do not exhaust the meaning of any verse even when it becomes familiar and you think you know it. **Prov. 2:4** “If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;” There are always new observations to be seen or mined as a miner searches for silver or gold.

3. **Read Creatively**, visualize yourself in the time, history, and situation of the passage as much as possible to experience a feel for what the author and the people of his day were experiencing. God chose to speak in the context of real human history, so we may take courage that these same words will speak again and again in our own ‘real’ history, as they have throughout the history of the church.

4. **Read With Study Tools In Hand**, with paper and pen and Bible study helps at your finger tips to help you observe and answer your questions. We wouldn’t go mining for silver or gold without tools would we? Of course not. So we need to use tools like a CONCORDANCE, COMMENTARIES, BIBLE DICTIONARY, ATLAS, and WORD STUDY HELPS like Vine’s *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, etc.

5. **Read to Understand**, purposely, to make observations of the text that will help you understand its meaning. This means asking questions like who, what, when, where, why, and how. Of course, such reading requires constant reflection and pondering over the text you are reading. This brings us to our next point in the process of meditation, reflection.

**Reflection**
Someone has defined reflection this way. “Reflection is the mind and heart at work, thinking over and concentrating on what the eyes have seen … Reflection in Bible reading should have the intensity of meditation, whereby the soul has the desire and intention of obeying God’s Word.”

So, how can we read the Bible like this? I would suggest the following:

1. **Reflect Purposely**, to fulfill the biblical objectives of meditation—worship, instruction, motivation, transformation. As the Psalmist who prayed: “I will meditate on Thy precepts, and regard Thy ways” (Psa. 119:15), and again, “Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts, So I will meditate on Thy wonders” (vs. 27).

2. **Reflect Imaginatively**, visualize the setting and put yourself there. Try to feel the burden, the concern, the fear, the love, etc. Seek to taste and feel every word you read. Occasionally, read the word aloud to yourself. The Hebrew word in Psalm 1:2 means “muse, mutter and sigh”.

3. **Reflect Humbly**, realize that you are not reading just a book, but that which is the very Word from God, God-breathed and authoritative, alive and powerful. It should truly humble us to know that in the Bible, the Holy One who is also the Almighty One, has spoken to us in the Bible.

4. **Reflect Prayerfully**, trusting the Spirit of God to open up your eyes and heart to see, understand, and respond to the Word. Again, read as the Psalmist who prayed: “Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law” (Ps. 119:18). This is also the position of humility and respect. God’s Word is a spiritual book requiring spiritual perception.

5. **Reflect Patiently** but expectantly, waiting on the Lord to teach you and show you. Time and patience are important elements to effective meditation and examination of the Word. Again remember that the great enemies of meditating on the Word are noise, hurry, and crowds. Thus, the Psalmist, looking for insight to God’s Word and direction in his life prayed, “Lead me in Thy truth and teach me, For Thou art the God of my salvation; For Thee I wait all the day” (Ps. 25:5).

**Response**

Responding is the process whereby we make personal application of our observations and understanding of the text. Through meditation we internalize that we may make what we’ve meditated upon personal to us. We should understand that we are the focal point in the application of or response to what we have studied. This is not selfish or self-centered. 2 Tim. 3:16 makes this clear. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”. We are meditating on the Word as part of our search for spiritual help, direction,
and food. The Bible is addressed to each of us personally. As we meditate we might ask ourselves the following questions:

- How does this truth apply to my life in four spheres: in my personal life, in my family, at work, in my church, and in my neighborhood?
- How does this passage affect a previously held conviction?
- In view of this truth, what specific changes should I make in my life? Is there a practice I should begin? Is there a practice I should change? Is there a practice I should stop? In other words, am I applying this truth? If not why not? Was it ignorance, rebellion, indifference?
- How do I propose to carry out these changes? We need to be specific here.

**CONCLUSION**

In *Psalm 19:14* we find David praying: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." What Paul commands us to do in our text ("meditate on these things") is the means by which we can assure that our meditations will be acceptable in the sight of our Lord!

If you are not a Christian, or if you are one who is falling or has fallen away, then there are some things in particular upon which you ought to meditate:

1. What is your standing in God’s sight?
2. What would happen if you were to die today?
3. What do you need to do to be found in the grace of God?
4. Why delay and longer?