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THE CHRISTIAN'S REASONABLE SERVICE

in which Divine Truths concerning the
COVENANT OF GRACE
are Expounded, Defended against Opposing Parties,
and their Practice Advocated

as well as
The Administration of this Covenant in the
Old and New Testaments

by

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...for instruction in righteousness...

the land were to be destroyed, the eye of the Lord and His mercy will be upon you and your loved ones. You will then have peace in your conscience wherever you go, knowing that you have endeavored to uphold the pillars of both church and country.

If some of the godly have agreed to set apart a day, endeavor to join them, and stir up some other godly person to do likewise. The Lord will most certainly be among you; He will come to you and bless you. It will engender a sweet bond of mutual love, a holy mutual fellowship, and quicken both love and the performance of good works. When you make work of having solitary days of fasting, you will experience that the promise is true and will be fulfilled for you: "Thy Father...shall reward thee" (Mat. 6:18). The Lord will manifest that this is pleasing to Him. He will increase your light, and strengthen your heart in faith; you will be nearer to God in your walk, and lead a life which is more sober and thoughtful; and your conscience will be more tender. You will have more strength against sin, and receive more comfort from the Lord. He who has exercised himself in this has never regretted that he has done so, and we wish to recommend it as an exceptional means unto spiritual growth.

When you thus have determined to observe either a public or secret day of prayer, you must prepare yourself for this ahead of time by removing all obstacles, by being moderate in your intake of food and drink in the evening, and by getting a moderate amount of sleep at night. Confess your aversion for such a day of prayer as a sin before the Lord, and ask that you may be fit to conduct yourself well on this day of prayer. If you intend to observe this with others, pray that the others may be fit for this as well.

If the day of prayer is spent as described above, let your conduct also be appropriate subsequent to this. Rejoice in the evening that you have food to eat, since you are not worthy of one bite of bread. Thank the Lord that He gives it to you in His favor—as having been purchased with the blood of Christ. Be moderate in your use of food as well as in sleeping. Preserve the impression of all that has transpired that day; that is, of all your initiatives toward God and of God's manifestations toward you. Give close attention as to how God responds to your day of prayer, for God will respond to it. In this way you will accustom yourself to this duty, and discover so much sweetness in it, that you will long to have such a day of prayer by renewal.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-SIX

Watchfulness

As fasting is conjoined to prayer, so is watchfulness conjoined to prayer: "Watch and pray" (Mat. 26:41); "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph. 6:18); "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Pet. 4:7). We must therefore also take this duty to heart—a duty the Lord Jesus has so solemnly commanded us to perform. "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37); "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Mat. 24:42).

There is a *spiritual watchfulness* and a *physical watchfulness*. Both are the duty of a Christian and we shall therefore speak of both.

Spiritual Watchfulness Defined

Spiritual watchfulness consists in watching over our soul in a careful and circumspect manner in order that no evil may befall her. Spiritual life is a precious and desirable treasure to the believer, far excelling the entire world and all that is in it. It has many enemies which lie in wait for it—not to be a partaker of it, but to destroy it; they hate it. A Christian is therefore diligent in preserving this life. "Keep thy heart with all diligence" (Prov. 4:23). The believer knows the value of that life, is acquainted with his enemies and their activities, loves this life, is desirous to preserve and increase it, takes care that it is not injured, and is thus circumspect and always on guard if there is danger approaching from elsewhere. If he becomes aware of something, he is alert and stands ready with his weapons in hand to turn away the enemy, attacking all those who come too close.

Spiritual watchfulness is exercised with several objectives in

view. First of all, it pertains to *the spiritual influences* of the Holy Spirit, such as light, comfort, and strength — whereby the spiritual life of the soul is strengthened. A Christian prays for this, and during prayer, as well as immediately thereafter, waits to see whether the Lord will grant him something so that he may immediately receive it and seal it within his heart. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psa. 5:3); "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors" (Prov. 8:34); "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation" (Micah 7:7).

Secondly, watchfulness pertains to *all that issues forth from the soul*, such as thoughts, words, and deeds, lest the soul be injured by any sin. Instead, there will be a striving that our entire conduct may be according to God's will, whereby spiritual life increases in strength. "But watch thou in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5). A Christian strives for this: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Psa. 39:1); "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I have chosen the way of truth: Thy judgments have I laid before me" (Psa. 119:59, 30). Since the Christian is conscious of his impotence, he cries to God for help. "Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psa. 141:3); "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD" (Psa. 19:14). The believer guards his heart jealously, and since he knows that there are snares everywhere, he proceeds very cautiously. He is watchful in his every deed and ponders the path of his feet (Prov. 4:26). Time and again he seeks counsel and asks, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). He looks whether the way before him is safe and each time sets down his feet with caution lest he step into a snare. He walks, so to speak, on his toes. This can be ascertained from the word ἀκρίβως (*akribos*): "See then that ye walk circumspectly" (Eph. 5:15). Then, when he finds all to be smooth, he proceeds courageously. "The LORD of hosts... hath made them as His goodly horse in the battle. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle" (Zec. 10:3, 5).

Thirdly, the person who is spiritually watchful also keeps an eye out for *all that enters the soul*, so that no enemy will steal in to harm his spiritual life. He knows his enemies — the devil, the world, and his flesh — and he knows their wickedness and their tireless activity. He is on his guard for that very reason, and he thus "closes the doors and the windows." "I made a covenant with mine eyes" (Job

31:1); "He...stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil" (Isa. 33:15). In accordance with the exhortation of the apostle he is on guard against the devil. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The Christian is on guard against the world when it approaches him with either flattery, threats, or persecutions, conquering all this by faith (1 John 5:4). He is on guard against his flesh, indwelling corruption, and the sin which so easily besets him. The apostle exhorts him to do so: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11).

Believers Exhorted to Be Watchful

Therefore, Christians, stir up your desire to be watchful and make work of it with the courage of a man. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

(1) We are by nature very drowsy. Our spiritual life is feeble, weak, has but little vigor, and indwelling corruption will very readily befuddle our understanding. We shall therefore very readily slumber as the bride did: "I sleep, but my heart waketh" (Song of Sol. 5:2). Such was also the experience of the wise virgins: "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept" (Mat. 25:5).

(2) The enemies are wakeful and are tireless in the execution of their assaults. They never miss an opportunity to rob us of an advantage; and if we are not watchful, they will have the advantage.

(3) How scandalous it is if we are assaulted by the enemy due to our lethargy! If we are wounded while wielding the sword, those wounds will soon heal. If, however, we allow ourselves to be conquered due to lethargy, we must come into the presence of the Lord with shame, for we are then without excuse.

(4) The wounds inflicted by the enemy are very grievous; his arrows are poisonous and burrow in deeply. If the balm of Gilead, administered by the Great Physician, did not heal those wounds, they would be the cause of death. They would rob you of your precious treasure — spiritual life — and of all your valuable, spiritual ornaments. "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev. 16:15).

(5) When we are watchful, however, we need not fear the enemy. How much more honor and praise will then be enjoyed in the presence of the Lord Jesus, who will crown the conqueror with glory! "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Rev. 2:7); "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second

death" (Rev. 2:11); "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne" (Rev. 3:21). Therefore, watch!

Guidance unto Watchfulness

If you therefore are desirous of being spiritually watchful, then use those means you also use to remain physically alert.

(1) He who excessively partakes of food and drink cannot be alert. Therefore, he who wishes to be alert will be moderate and sober. Such is also true here: "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore, and pray always" (Luke 21:34, 36).

(2) He who wishes to be watchful seeks the company of those who are watchful with him. We must do likewise in the spiritual realm: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow" (Eccl. 4:9-10).

(3) He who wishes to be watchful will request someone to awaken him if need be. Such is also true here. Since no one but the Lord is able to awaken us and to keep us watchful, we shall thus request of Him in prayer to do so. The Lord will answer this request and arouse us: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (Isa. 50:4).

(4) He who wishes to be watchful will set his alarm clock, which will arouse him at the appropriate time. This "alarm clock" is the fear of God. "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life" (Prov. 14:27).

(5) He who wishes to be watchful will not easily and lazily lie down; rather, he will keep himself occupied. Such is also true here, for if we keep ourselves occupied with the reading of God's Word, prayer, singing, and engagement in the Lord's work with delight, then, even if we have but little strength, we shall be spiritually watchful. "Watch therefore: blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing" (Mat. 24:42, 46).

Physical Watchfulness

Physical watchfulness consists in depriving one's self of sleep at a time which is designated for sleep. As God has ordained that man's life be preserved by means of food and drink, so also by way of sleep — which is the refreshing dew of nature and, so to speak, moistens the brain, thereby refreshing it. If we spend too much time sleeping, we shall feed our vices, weaken our body, and it will be the cause of numerous ills and sicknesses. If we sleep too little, the body will become weak and we shall be unfit for work. Thus both — too much or too little sleep — will cause the mind to be dull and lethargic. The metabolism of the body is not the same in

all men; the one needs more sleep than the other. Thus, one who performs heavy labor needs more sleep than one who leads a quiet and sedentary life. Every godly person ought to know himself in this respect, so that he will not harm his body either way and thus would commit sin. Wakefulness can sometimes be the result of illness, mental torment, anxiety, or an intense desire to commit such sins as gambling or dancing, or the mental reflection upon things which one would indeed desire, and about which one builds castles in the sky. Sometimes we need to be wakeful, either because we are compelled to this by our calling, or because we are determined to complete a set amount of work — doing this in our calling either manually or by way of study. We are not discussing such watchfulness here, but rather a watchfulness of a religious nature.

Physical Watchfulness for Religious Reasons

To be watchful for religious reasons is a special religious exercise in which we deprive ourselves of sleep for the entire night or a portion of it. Such time is then used entirely for the purpose of engaging ourselves in prayer, reading, and meditation — in order to crucify the flesh with its lusts and to grow spiritually.

All that we have said in our exposition of fasting is also applicable to our explanation concerning watchfulness. The one is a deprivation of food and the other of sleep. It is a *religious exercise*, for the objective is to seek God in this manner. The time is not spent in being quiet and inactive, but it consists of spiritual activity. It is a *special exercise* and thus we must not engage in it too often, nor make it a daily activity, for this would be injurious to the body, which soon would become unfit for anything.

It consists, first of all, in a *depriving one's self of sleep*. The time involved — that is, when, how long, whether it is the entire night or some time during the night — is entirely a matter of personal choice. It can be at the beginning of the night, in the morning, or in between these, one arising out of sleep and lying down again some time later. We shall then deprive ourselves of sleep; and if we become sleepy, we must fight against it — doing so either with physical means such as getting up and walking around or by putting something tart or bitter in one's mouth; as well as by the use of spiritual means: prayer, crying for the Spirit, and mourning over our listlessness. This is not to suggest that the deprivation of sleep itself is religious in nature, but it merely belongs to the mode of this religious exercise. Watchfulness must be accompanied by spiritual exercises.

Secondly, it consists in a *seeking after God* by means of prayer, reading, meditation, or reflection. We are then not only watchful

because we have the time for it, but rather that we might seek the countenance of God with a tender heart — a tenderness engendered by watchfulness and spiritual wrestling. It is a watchful praying and a prayerful watchfulness; they mutually stimulate each other. This is not an obligation which devolves upon all men, for there can be physical unfitness, or it can be that due to either hard work during the day or their present circumstances, they are in need of strength. They who are either single, have a godly family, or have a godly partner can do this more readily. Others, however, would cause trouble by this, and would stir up more that is not edifying in their homes than that which would edify them during this time. Such can occasionally engage in this while remaining in bed. They are then wakeful in all quietness without anyone noticing that they quietly send up their secret prayers Godward. As much as possible our watchfulness is to be such that no one is aware of it. By way of prayerful watchfulness and watchful prayer, the body (which yields much opportunity for sin and stimulates us toward sin) is subdued and rendered more useful.

Watchfulness Commanded and Exemplified

(1) The Lord Jesus enjoins His disciples to be watchful in this manner: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mat. 26:41).

(2) The Lord Jesus has left us an example in this: "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35); "And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

(3) Such has been the practice of the saints. Jacob remained alone the entire night in order to pray (Gen. 32:24; Hosea 12:5). David testified of himself: "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments" (Psa. 119:62); "In the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life" (Psa. 42:8); "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried....Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word" (Psa. 119:147-148). Asaph did likewise: "My sore ran in the night, and ceased not" (Psa. 77:2). The bride sought upon her bed at night, and arose during the night to seek out her precious Jesus (Song of Sol. 3:1-2; 5:5).

The Christians of the church of the first century endeavored to do likewise. Gradually, however, this changed into a superstition, just as popery still has its superstitious *vigils*, to which they attribute great holiness, and deem them to be very meritorious. It was

also much more common during the initial time of the Reformation. If you wish to read a more comprehensive description of this, you ought to read *De Trappen des Geestelijken Levens* (The Steps of Spiritual Life) by my deceased father, Theodore à Brakel.

From all this we observe what earnestness and zeal these holy men had; if we only had more zeal, we would emulate them more. However, alas! this earnestness and zeal is lacking in these days which are void of zeal, and therefore, why am I even speaking here of specific days of fasting and night-watches? However, the Lord can yet let this be a means so that it will not be entirely forgotten. May someone yet be stirred up by this — or at least be convinced of his lack of zeal, being even too hasty in his morning and evening exercises. May he be convinced how far removed he is from a frame which would stir him to arise in the night or that would move him to set apart a portion of the beginning or end of the night to be watchful for the purpose of engaging in prayer.

CHAPTER SEVENTY-EIGHT

Spiritual Meditation

In addition to solitude, we wish to consider the practice of holy meditation or spiritual reflection. *This is a spiritual exercise in which a godly person — having a heart which is separated from the earth and lifted up toward heaven — reflects upon and engages his thoughts toward God and divine things with which he was already previously acquainted. He does so in order to be led further into divine mysteries, to be kindled with love, to be comforted, and to be stirred up to lively exercises.*

Spiritual Meditation: A Religious Exercise

Spiritual meditation is a *religious exercise*. It neither consists in idleness, nor is it a passive disposition in which we are but recipients, permitting ourselves to be illuminated about the divine perfections and divine mysteries — just as a mirror is irradiated by the sun. Instead, it is an activity in which the soul is occupied in reflecting upon and reasoning about these matters, approving of them, delighting in them, is astonished about them and quickened by them.

Occasionally the Lord will manifest Himself to a person without the individual having prepared himself for this. The soul, perceiving this manifestation, will then allow herself to be led into this quietly, will follow gently, and will be active with it. At other times we may resolve to occupy ourselves with meditation, and will either go for a walk or seek another place of solitude to engage ourselves as such. Some are still small in grace, and since they do not know much as yet, there is also not much for them to meditate upon. Others would be able to meditate more, but they close the door at the very outset, being desirous to have at the beginning that which comes last. At the very outset they wish to have clear light, sensibil-

ity, enjoyment, and sweetness; even though these are matters in which meditation culminates, and are the very purpose for which one engages in meditation. Those who have wisdom in this area, however, will bring to mind the perfections of God, His operations in the realm of nature and of grace, as well as His dealings with them. They do this as if they were reading it in a book and permit themselves to be influenced thereby. They reason about these matters in a holy conversation with God. At one moment they give thanks, then they pray, and then again they rejoice. Then they will ask, anticipating an answer, and then again they will strengthen their faith thereby. It is thus that they occupy themselves and intensely involve themselves in doing so. If one thing escapes their attention, they will begin to reflect upon something else. If they have occupied themselves with matters too high for them, darkness coming upon them as a result, they will descend from this level and begin to reflect upon their previous experiences and the way in which God has led them.

It is a requisite for meditation that *the heart be separated from all things and be lifted up on high*. It does not merely suffice to have selected a place of solitude for the regular practice of meditation, but the soul itself must be disposed toward being in solitude; that is, she must be separated from all that is upon earth and be lifted up toward invisible things — as if she were alone with God in this world. During that time we must lay aside all cares, desires, and earthly engagements and turn heavenward toward God. This does not mean that we shall immediately be in such an elevated frame, but we shall be striving for this. There will be ejaculatory sighs with varying intensity for the manifestation of light and grace. While thus striving to attain to a fit frame for this, we shall begin to think and meditate. The soul being empty, seeks to be filled with substance whereby, while meditating, she may be nourished. She offers herself, opens herself, yearns, anticipates, and is active.

The Person who Meditates

The one who meditates must be a godly person. As the heart is, so will be the thoughts. An unconverted person — a natural person — will also have reflections, but these are consistent with his nature. "He shutteth his eyes to devise foward things" (Prov. 16:30); "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations" (Prov. 6:18). He reflects upon his previous ungodly deeds in which he finds renewed delight. Reflecting upon how his neighbor has wronged him, he becomes by renewal wrathful and bitter. He neither knows God nor His gracious operations. He also has no desire for them, and

therefore he neither can nor is willing to reflect upon them. His best mental activity consists in being occupied in the acquiring of knowledge of the Word; however, his objective in doing so is not sound, for it is his objective to be esteemed as a wise man, to be knowledgeable like others, and to be able to converse well. We dealt with such natural meditation in chapter 43.

Instead, spiritual meditation is the activity of a godly person who has spiritual light and life — the one less and the other more. He knows God and has a desire after God; this is the reason why his heart is repeatedly drawn to God. It was so sweet and delightful to him to have seen and tasted something of God that he could not forget it. Time and again it comes to mind and he desires to experience this again in a greater measure. Such meditation gives this experience a new sense of sweetness and stirs up his desires.

The Object of Meditation

The object of such meditation is *divine matters of which he has prior acquaintance*. There is, furthermore, an inquisitive thinking about and meditation upon those matters with which one is not yet acquainted but, nevertheless, desires to be acquainted with. However, the meditation in question here is a *practical* reflection upon matters with which we are acquainted and concerning which we wish to be inwardly moved again by way of meditation. He who is desirous to engage in spiritual meditation will sometimes pursue what comes to mind, and thus follow the Spirit indiscriminately from one subject to the next. If he wishes to be selective and to focus upon one subject, it will be without effect and there will be no progress. We therefore must merely follow and yield to those inner motions which flow forth out of such meditation — prayer, thanksgiving, love — and to follow up what we have resolved to do. At times the heart is empty and does not yield any food for thought; this could result in wandering thoughts. Then we are to select subject matter for meditation, and it is advisable initially to select an easy subject matter, such as the way in which the Lord has led us since childhood; that is, the parents from whom we were born, what transpired in our families, how we were raised, how we conducted ourselves, where we attended school or labored and what has transpired there, the sins committed in our youth, how things progressed after that, and how we conducted ourselves during our teenage years. One could also meditate upon the prosperity and adversity we have encountered, the ways in which the Lord has led us unto the means of salvation, what initially moved us to repent, and how — by way of falling and rising — this came to pass. If we thus proceed from

season to season, from experience to experience, from location to location, and from encounter to encounter, it will time and again stir special motions within us. While thus meditating, however, our heart must remain focused upon the Lord, and we must reflect upon each matter by relating it to the hand of God. In our scheduled devotional times we can also consider the work of redemption, beginning with eternal election, proceeding to the fall, from there to the promise of the Surety and Mediator and forward to the coming of Christ in the flesh—His life and deeds, and His suffering and death. In doing so we must focus upon each aspect to see whether it stirs up a motion within us. Hastiness in meditation will rob us of its fruitfulness. We can also consider the work of creation: its preservation and government, how all things are executed with precision by way of divine providence, and how each matter relates to one or more of God's attributes as they reveal themselves in His works.

Spiritual Meditation: A Work of God's Spirit

Spiritual meditation is a work of God's Spirit. The believer in and of himself is not capable of this. In addition to being known from personal experience, Scripture also teaches this: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:5). God initially grants life to the soul, and He quickens that life time and again whereby she desires and seeks for food. He causes matters to come to our mind and governs our thoughts to meditate upon them in a spiritual manner. When a man once possesses spiritual life, this life cannot be idle; it will be active by way of meditation. Since this life originates in heaven, it will also gravitate toward heaven. If it were not repressed by natural corruption, this life would always, without impediment, be exercised in holy meditation. Since spiritual life is repressed, however, it wrestles with this corruption and will break forth unto holy meditation. "My heart is inditing a good matter" (Psa. 45:1). To that end it is time and again needful that there be the influence of the Holy Spirit whereby He lifts up and maintains life. Such is the manner in which the regenerate man meditates; however, he is moved to that end by the Spirit of God.

The Objective of Meditation: Growth in Grace

The all-encompassing goal and objective of meditation is the building up and growth of spiritual life. More particularly, it will be our objective:

(1) to acquaint ourselves with God and to have communion with Him, since that constitutes the felicity of the soul;

(2) to rejoice and delight ourselves in God—in the beholding of whose countenance there is fullness of joy;

(3) to be kindled with love toward God, to believe in and sense God's love, and by renewal to be sweetly moved in love toward God;

(4) to be comforted when we are downcast, for by meditation upon former days and the works and perfections of God, the soul will generally find comfort and refreshment;

(5) to be quickened in sanctification, for by way of such spiritual meditation and reflection, as well as a communing with God in solitude, the soul will acquire a good habitual disposition. She has experienced how good it is to be near unto God and she knows that sin will rob her of this. She has understood something of God's holiness and that He is worthy to be obeyed and she has increased in her love toward God. Thus, meditation renders her more zealous to walk in the way of the Lord's commandments.

These are indeed the matters we shall be striving for, and the Lord will at times also manifest Himself upon such meditation—however, not always. It frequently happens that meditation is very lifeless, and that one neither finds delight nor sweetness in it so that he needs to desist. Such can occasionally be God's wise and sovereign dispensation. At times this can be the result of meditation not being a habitual practice, as well as a lack of experience in this heavenly art. At other times it can be caused by our listlessness toward this work, and the fact that the soul is ill-disposed toward this work. We must therefore not neglect this work, however, but resume it at another time. And if our occupation with this cannot be lengthy, we need to make it shorter—and we shall indeed experience that it is not in vain.

Believers Exhorted

Therefore, you who are lovers of God and of holiness, learn this secret art which is practiced but little, for:

First, God commands it; and since you are both obligated and willing to be obedient unto God in other matters, such must also be the case toward this duty. Consider the following injunctions: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh. 1:8); "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (Deu. 8:2).

Secondly, meditate upon the examples of the saints and let them be examples for you. There is the blessed virgin Mary: "But Mary

kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). There is David: "When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches" (Psa. 63:6); "O LORD, consider my meditation" (Psa. 5:1); "Let...the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in Thy sight" (Psa. 19:14). And consider Asaph: "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psa. 77:5-6).

Thirdly, it is the very nature of God's children to be desirous for this. Your heart is inclined toward this and you deem those happy who are thus engaged. Why then do you oppose the new man? Beloved, yield to your new nature. Consider in this respect Psalm 1:2: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

Fourthly, the very essence of sweetness is to be found herein, and it is profitable work. "My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD" (Psa. 104:34); "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Psa. 139:17-18). How much profit there is to be found in this! It consists in having fellowship with God, to enjoy His intimate affection, to receive a foretaste of heaven, to be changed into His image, to be adorned with the luster of His glory, and to enjoy all that your soul finds delight in. What more could you wish upon earth? Therefore, engage yourself in this exercise and become accustomed to it. Even if it is a difficult and arduous task at first, it will subsequently become more delightful, and the Lord will not permit you to seek Him in vain.

I do not wish to prescribe rules to you. Begin with it and you will experience yourself which way is best for you. Only make sure that you separate yourself fully, doing so with the intention and the desire to think of nothing else during that time. Let your heart go out in prayer for the reception of the Spirit, for quickening grace, as well as for guidance. If you perceive that you cannot make a beginning with this, then read a portion in the Word of God or sing a psalm.