

Thinking about Religion

By Gary Henry

“When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches” (Psalm 63:6). **Thinking about religion is not exactly the same thing as thinking about God.** The subject of religion often ends up being as much about ourselves and “our relationship to God” as about God Himself. We find ourselves pondering our attitude, our obedience, our feelings, our needs, our difficulties. At some point, however, should we not take time out and think about God Himself? Surely we must. We must contemplate His nature, His attributes, His will. We must meditate on our beloved God, allowing Him to be the sole object of our thought.

It is an interesting aspect of our religious life that we often spend so much time in polemics that we have little time left over to grow strong in the truth after we’ve defended it. C. S. Lewis, who was no small apologist himself, once said, “A man can’t always be defending the truth; there must be a time to feed on it.” It’s not that debates about religion are wrong. Given the truth-is-anything-you-want-it-to-be temper of our times, we need more debate, rather than less (Jude 3,4). But the truth is not to be defended merely because we enjoy the clash of ideas in the intellectual arena. The point of the whole enterprise is to clear away mistaken ideas about God — so that God can be truthfully thought of and adored for what He is! If we never get around to actually meditating on God, then we’re not much better off than those Paul spoke of who “knew God,” but failed to “glorify Him as God” (Rom. 1:21).

There is a passage in Malachi which seems to indicate that God has a special place in His heart for those who love to think of Him: “Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16). We greatly benefit when we think about God. But the greatest good of all is that our minds are lifted out of our little concerns and caught up in the wonder of Someone who existed long before we ever had the need to think of Him. “There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon). (From WordPoints.com)

Thinking about Fear

For those who fret about the legalization of marijuana: the two deadliest drugs in America are both legal. Tobacco kills more than 500,000 Americans per year. Alcohol is causal in 88,000 deaths per year (including those killed by drunk drivers and alcohol violence). These two drugs are responsible for more emergency room visits than any other cause (4,600,000 per year). By comparison: the number of Americans killed by terrorists per year is 24; the number of Americans killed by sharks per year is one; the number of Americans killed by lightning per year is 26. Reckon we’re worried about the wrong things?

Thinking about Preaching

The man who wrote “Home, Sweet Home,” John Howard Payne, never had a permanent residence. The man who wrote “Dixie,” Dan D. Emmett, was a Northerner from Ohio and wrote the song while living in New York. The couple who wrote “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” Bill Danoff and Taffy Nivert, had never been to West Virginia. They had only seen postcards of the state. The men who wrote “Take Me Out to the Ballgame,” Albert von Tilzer and Jack Norworth, had never been to a baseball game. A preacher doesn’t need to be lost in sin to preach to those lost in sin; he does not need to be an alcoholic to preach to alcoholics; he does not need to be a

thief to preach to thieves. He must remember that he was once a sinner, but he does not need to experience your sins in order to address your practice of them.

Thinking about the End

Solomon said that "it is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for...the living takes it to heart" (Ecc. 7:2). Death, whether it is sudden or expected, has a way of teaching those that remain. Moses reminds us of these lessons in his prayer.

Death is real. "Thou dost turn man back into dust" (vs. 3). Try as we may to ignore its certainty, it is, according to an Arab proverb, a "black camel that kneels beside every man's gate." Vitamins, exercises, treatments and surgeries only prolong your inevitable appointment (Heb. 9:27).

Life is short. "For soon it is gone and we fly away" (vs. 10). James compares our lives to a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away and David said, "surely man at his best is a mere breath" (Psalm 39:5). Even those that live 80 and 90 years are just a fleeting moment in the eternal ages.

Judgment is certain. "So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom" (vs. 12). Since life is short, every day is extremely valuable and one that we cannot afford to lose. Even today. And the manner in which you number your days determines where you will spend days without number.

The Christian need not fear death and judgment. Jesus said, "He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

Just Thinking

--Pity costs nothing and is worth every penny.

--The sign on the door of opportunity reads PUSH.

--Reprove your friend in private, but praise him in public.

--Iron, when heated in the flames and pounded with a hammer, becomes a fine sword. So it is with wise men and saints; they are tested by abuse.

--You may not understand everything you read in the Bible, but you can believe and obey those parts you do understand.

--One of the best things a person can have up his sleeve is a funny bone.

--If you are patient in one moment of anger, you may save yourself one hundred days of sorrow.

--Half of our problems come from wanting things our own way; the other half comes from getting our own way.

--Temptation comes quickly; opportunity takes a little longer.

--You can't hold a man down indefinitely without staying down there with him.

--Perspective: the best cure for a little problem is a bigger one.

--Inconsistency: millions long for immortality who do not know what to do with themselves on a rainy afternoon.

--Experience should be a guidepost, not a hitching post.

--Intelligence is when you spot a flaw in your spouse's reasoning; wisdom is when you refrain from pointing it out.

--"Be not angry that you cannot make others as you wish them to be, for you often cannot make yourself as you wish to be." (Thomas a' Kempis)

--If you want to get out of the rat race, stop trying to keep up with the rats.

--If you are not being criticized, you may not be doing very much.

--In this life, it seems that the old believe everything, the middle aged suspect everything, and the young know everything.

- There is a vast difference between books that men make and the book that makes men.
- We do not get rid of our faults by calling attention to the faults of others. The way some people find fault, you would think there was a reward for it.
- Service is love dressing in work clothes.
- Luck is the lazy man's assessment of a working man's success.
- Memory is the key to the past, not the future.
- It is easy for a man to express his opinion, but it is much harder for him to know what he is talking about.