

The Secret of Radiant Living

Another
STUDY IN BIBLICAL ACCURACY
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The Scripture used throughout this study is quoted from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. Any explanatory insertions by the author within a Scripture verse are enclosed in brackets [].

The awe-inspiring abilities latent within the human mind are indeed wonderful and important to the believer. One of these great abilities is mentioned in the book of Colossians, chapter three, verse two:

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

Here we are exhorted to set our thinking (the word "affection" is *phroneō*, mind) on the things of God. Your mind has the ability to concentrate upon a specific thing, and to remain in that state of concentration for a considerable period of time.

There are mentioned in The Word specific things upon which we, as believers, should concentrate our thinking. We are also blessed with several records of men who concentrated on things other than what the Father intended. As we examine these we can learn by their mistakes. The records clearly show what was the outcome of their concentration upon inferior things, and, above all, how these men were brought back to a right understanding of what they should concentrate upon.

How to be Miserable

Asaph, the psalmist, gives us our first insight into this subject in Psalm 77. He tells us of the time in his own life when he faced serious problems. His autobiography in this Psalm tells us, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted" (verse 2). His mind refused to be comforted. In the midst of tremendous trouble he says: "I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed" (verse 3).

He briefly remembered the greatness and the goodness of God to him in past days, and yet he was troubled. He could not conceive why this particular problem was upon him, nor why, as he thought, God had

left him alone. As his mind went from thinking about the great things of the past days to the terrible problems of the present his spirit was overwhelmed. So much so he tells us in verse four, "I am so troubled that I cannot speak." Psychologically this description speaks of tremendous depression.

Even though we do not speak, the human mind is always active. Asaph found that while his problem was so great he could not speak, yet his mind began recalling some of the events prior to this crisis. "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times" (verse 5). He remembered the goodness of God in past days. "I call to remembrance my song in the night" (verse 6) – that great time when through the sheer exuberance of joy I sang in the darkest night. "I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (verse 6).

Why has this happened to me? "Will the Lord cast off for ever?", he queries in verse seven, "and will he be favourable no more?" Has my day of grace ended? Has my wonderful fellowship with the Father somehow come to an end? Doesn't He like me any more?

Verse eight continues in the same questioning vein - the human mind at work in the midst of trouble. "Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore?" Are God's promises finished with now? Does this mean that everything God has promised will no longer come to pass? The questioning continues, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah" (verse 9).

If we were honest we would admit that many times our mind has followed a similar pattern. Undoubtedly each one of us could write as graphic description of the working of the mind in the midst of trouble as this Psalm. However, what is written here is written for our learning.

We should now carefully observe how this man was able to get on the right track once again. In his autobiography, he says, "And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who *is so* great a God as *our* God? Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people" (verse 10-14).

What made the difference? What caused this sudden statement of thanks and praise to God? This man had found that as long as he looked within, as long as he sat there and let his mind ramble on in the field of negative thinking, just so long would he be miserable. But the moment he started thinking about the greatness and the goodness of God, and this was spoken out in a positive confession, at that moment the problem sank into insignificance.

We, too, should be careful about what we concentrate upon. To concentrate upon yourself, your own unworthiness, your supposed inability, will always drag you down. Multitudes of Christian believers are constantly exhorted to search their hearts and examine themselves. How far greater it would be if we spent our time considering what God has done for us in Christ Jesus, considering how we can manifest in a greater measure the more abundant life that Jesus came to give us. Let us learn the lesson well, that as long as we look within we shall be miserable.

How to be Distracted

Another autobiography that will help us in our quest is given in Psalm 73. This honest and factual account of the working of the human mind should again be noted carefully. This particular man did not spend time looking within but his error was equally as bad. Looking back

upon the incident, he starts with a positive statement in verse one, "Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me," he says in verse two, "my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." He felt very insecure, as if he was perhaps slipping rapidly into insanity.

The interesting thing to us in our current search is that he clearly tells us what caused this state. Verse three commences with the word "for," giving us the reason for the statement of verse two. "For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked." With this particular man the problem was not of looking within, of feeling unworthy, of feeling unable to do things; his problem was looking at other people. These people had no faith in God, were out to make every penny they could, and were people to whom it seemed nothing ever went wrong.

He lists carefully his observations in verse four and following. He notices first their good health and abounding strength, causing them to swell with pride. Their own ability to supply their needs and greeds makes them people whose "eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish" (verse 7). Because nothing ever went wrong with them, or so it seemed, they spoke "wickedly *concerning* oppression" (verse 8). They did not mind what they said or to whom they said it – "they speak loftily." In fact so sure were they of their position they spoke against the heavens itself, against the greatness and goodness of God. "How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" (verse 11).

In verse twelve he seems to conclude the whole matter. "Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches." His accurate observations sound like the twentieth century. People with

health and prosperity, but without ethics, morals and above all, without a knowledge of God.

The observation of these things cause this man to literally sit down and wring his hands in despair all day long. He tells us that when he thought to know these things it was too painful for him. This man learned that when we look around we are distracted from the major emphasis of life. We are distracted from the attitudes, beliefs and concepts which should characterize the believer. Looking around will always cause distraction, even as looking within will cause us to be miserable.

We must continue further in this autobiography and discover how this man got back on the right track once again. The great secret of his change in thinking is given in verse seventeen: "Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end." Until he went to the place where God's Word was spoken, where God's praise was given, he could not comprehend the situation. There in God's house he thought and dwelt upon the greatness and goodness of God. He then realized that the situation was actually the reverse of what he had been thinking

In verse two he told us his feet had almost gone and well nigh slipped. But in verse eighteen he states clearly to God, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." The situation was exactly the reverse. Instead of his feet being slippery, he was the one who was secure. But they, the wicked and prosperous ones, were indeed slippery. "How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (verse 19).

The secret is obvious. Spend time searching The Word, filling your mind with the great thoughts of all God has done for you in Christ Jesus. Then you will see things from God's point of view and not from the point of view of this world.

This man saw the error of his ways for he tells us in verses 21 and 22, "Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins [in my mind]. So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee." But he says now, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory" (verses 23, 24).

To look within will make us miserable; to look around will make us distracted. Then where should we look? Upon what should we concentrate our thinking?

How to be Radiant

To understand the positive viewpoint as to what we should concentrate upon we will look at several verses in different parts of The Word. Since we have used the Psalms for our material so far in this study we will look first at Psalm 34:5, "They looked unto him, and were radiant" (American Standard Version). This statement of fact is given by David, following his testimony of God's goodness in his life. "I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (verse 4). He then states, "They looked unto him, and were radiant," to show that this situation is common to all God's people who will adjust and control their thinking.

The result of looking unto Him is to become radiant; to have a smile on your lips, a thrill in your heart and a spring in your step. Since God is Spirit, this looking unto Him cannot mean a physical look. It means concentrating upon the nature and acts of a loving Father.

In the book of Hebrews we are exhorted to look to Jesus. In chapter twelve and verse two we read, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith." The impact of the words "looking unto" is interesting and vital in the Greek. A more literal translation would be,

"Looking away from all else unto Jesus." Not just a brief glimpse or a fleeting thought, but a continued, prolonged concentration upon what God did for us in Christ Jesus. We should look unto Jesus, for He said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

The next verse in Hebrews twelve gives added light on this subject. "For consider him...lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (verse 3). Both verses two and three signify an action that we are to do by an act of our will. There is a choice involved; we can do it or we can choose not to do it. We can choose to look unto Him and be radiant, or we can choose not to consider Him and thus become wearied and faint in our minds. There is only one intelligent and logical choice for the believer: to look away from all else unto Jesus.

A similar exhortation is found in Hebrews 3:1, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Again we are exhorted to consider Christ, especially in relation to what God did for us in Christ Jesus and freely made available to every born-again believer. How great, how wonderful, how thrilling it is to fill our minds with the greatness of The Word.

The important things in life are not those things which we can see but rather eternal, spiritual things which cannot be observed by the human eye. In II Corinthians 4:18 we read, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal." Again the exhortation is given to fill our minds with spiritual things. Undoubtedly as we live our natural lives in a material world, there are many things we must think upon. However, the real, lasting things are the spiritual. Surely if these are the things that are going to

count then we should spend much time concentrating upon them.

Let us consider one more verse that will help us in understanding the object which should fill our minds. "Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind is stayed *on thee*" (Isaiah 26:3). This perfect and constant peace is something to be desired by every believer. It is available as we spend time keeping our mind, our thoughts upon God.

Considering unitedly all these great promises we find the secret of how to be radiant. It is simply looking unto God; looking unto Jesus; looking not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; staying our mind upon Him.

Let us remember, looking within will make us miserable; looking around will cause us to be distracted; but looking unto Him is the great secret of radiant Christian living.