

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded: Chapter Four — *Other evidences of thoughts about spiritual things, arising from an internal principle of grace, whereby they are an evidence of our being spiritually minded. The abounding of these thoughts, how far, and wherein such an evidence.*

MAIN THESIS: “The second evidence¹ that our thoughts of spiritual things proceed from an internal fountain of sanctified light and affections, or that they are acts or fruits of our being spiritually minded, is, that they abound in us, that our minds are filled with them.” — Genesis 6:5²; Ephesians 5:18-19³; Psalm 119⁴.

- I. “Consider what proportion your thoughts of spiritual things bear, with those of other things. Our principal interest and concern, as we profess, lie in things spiritual, heavenly, and eternal. It is not then a foolish thing to suppose, that our thoughts about these things should not hold some proportion with those about other things; nay, that they should not exceed them?” (69)
 - A. “There are such [thoughts] as are exercised about their callings and lawful occasions. These are numberless and endless; especially among a sort of men who rise early and go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness, or are particularly industrious and diligent in their ways. These thoughts men approve themselves in, and judge them their duty, as they are in their proper place and measure.” (69-70)
 1. “But even among the best of [men], many will continually spend the strength of their minds and vigor of their spirits, about their affairs all the day long; and so they can pray in the morning and evening, with some thoughts sometimes of spiritual things, occasionally administered, suppose they acquit themselves very well.” (71)
 2. “We all profess that we are bound for heaven, immortality, and glory: but is it any evidence we really design it, if all our thoughts are consumed about the trifles of this world, which we must leave behind us, and have only occasional thoughts of things above? I shall elsewhere show, if God will, how men may be spiritually minded in their earthly affairs.” (71)
 3. “This whole rule is grounded on that of our Savior, **Matthew 6:31, 33, 34**, ‘Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow.’ ... **First**, That we take no such thought about them as should carry along with it a disquietude of mind, through a distrust of

¹ **Evidence #1 (p. 29):** “That they be natural arising from ourselves, and not from outward occasions.”

² “It is the character of all men in the state of depraved nature and apostasy from God, that ‘every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually,’ **Genesis 6:5**. All persons in that condition are not swearers, blasphemers, drunkards, adulterers, idolaters, or the like; these are the vices of particular persons, the effects of particular constitutions and temptations... A relinquishment of this or that particular sin is not an evidence of a translation from this state; for, as was said, such particular sins proceed from particular lusts and temptations, and are not the immediate universal consequence of that depravation of nature which is equal in all. Such alone are the vanity and wickedness of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart.” (64-65)

³ “To this purpose is the advice of the apostle, **Ephesians 5:18,19**, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” ...It is unto this end, namely, that he by his grace may fill them with holy, spiritual thoughts, as, on the contrary, men drunk unto an excess are filled with those that are foolish, vain, and wicked. So the words of verse 19 do declare; for he adviseth us to express our abounding thoughts in such duties as will give an especial vent unto them. Wherefore, when we are spiritually minded, we shall abound in spiritual thoughts, or thoughts of spiritual things.” (67)

⁴ “Consider [in **Psalm 119**] what David expresseth of himself, as unto his constant delight in and continual thoughts of the law of God; which was the only means of divine revelation at that season. Try yourselves by that pattern; examine yourselves whether you can truly speak the same words with him, at least if not in the same degree of zeal, yet with the same sincerity of grace. You will say, “That was David. It is not for us, it is not our duty, to be like unto him, at least not to be equal with him.” But as far as I know, we must be like him, if ever we intend to come to the place where he is. It will ruin our souls, if, when we read in the Scripture how the saints of God express their experience in faith, love, delight in God, and constant meditation on him, we grant that it was so with them, that they were good and holy men, but it is not necessary that it should be so with us. These things are not written in the Scripture to show what they were, but what we ought to be. All things concerning them were “written for our admonition,” 1 Corinthians 10:11. And if we have not the same delight in God as they had, the same spiritual mindedness in thoughts and meditations of heavenly things, we can have no evidence that we please God as they did, or shall go to that place whither they are gone. Profession of the life of God passeth with many at a very low and easy rate. Their thoughts are for the most part vain and earthly, their communication unsavory, and sometimes corrupt, their lives at best uneven and uncertain as unto the rule of obedience; yet all is well, all is life and peace! The holy men of old, who obtained this testimony, that they pleased God, did not so walk before him. They meditated continually on the law; thought of God in the night seasons; spake of his ways, his works, his praise; their whole delight was in him, and in all things they ‘followed hard after him.’ It is the example of David in particular that I have proposed; and it is a promise of the grace to be administered by the gospel, that “he that is feeble shall be as David,” **Zechariah 12:8**, and if we are not so in his being spiritually minded, it is to be feared we are not partakers of the promise.” (67-69)

the fatherly care and providence of God... **Secondly**, No thought that, for constancy and engagement of spirit, should be like unto those which we ought to have about spiritual things. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,' Let that be the principal thing in your thoughts and consciences... Let a man industriously engaged in the way of his calling try himself by this rule every evening." (71-72)

B. "There are a multitude of thoughts in the minds of men, which are vain, useless, and altogether unprofitable. These ordinarily, through a dangerous mistake, are looked on as not sinful, because, as it is supposed, the matter of them is not so; and therefore men rather shake them off for their folly, and their guilt." (73)

C. There are thoughts that are formally evil; they are so in their nature, being corrupt contrivances to fulfill the desires of the flesh in the lusts thereof... I shall not therefore make any comparison between them and spiritual thoughts, for they abound only in them that are carnally minded.

II. "The second rule to this purpose is, that we would consider, whether thoughts of spiritual things do constantly take possession of their proper seasons. There are some times and seasons in the course of men's lives, wherein they retire themselves unto their own thoughts." (74)

A. "Most professors are convinced that it is their duty to pray morning and evening, and it is to be wished that they were all found in the practice of it. But if ordinarily they judge themselves, in the performance of that duty, to be discharged from any further exercise of spiritual thoughts, applying them to things worldly, useless, or vain, they can make no presence to be spiritually minded." (76)

B. "There are some times and seasons in the course of men's lives, wherein they retire themselves unto their own thoughts." (75)

1. "But they who are wise will be at home as much as they can, and have as many seasons for such their retirements as is possible for them to attain... The evening and the morning, the times of waking on the bed, those of the necessary cessation of all ordinary affairs, of walking, journeying, and the like, are such seasons. If we are spiritually minded, if thoughts of spiritual things do abound in us, they will ordinarily, and that with constancy, possess these seasons, look upon them as those which are their due, which belong unto them; for they are expressly assigned unto them in the way of rule, expressed in examples and commands. See **Psalm 16:7, 8; 92:2; Deuteronomy 6:7**. If they are usually given up unto other ends and occasions, are possessed with thoughts of another nature, it is an open evidence that spiritual thoughts have but little interest in our minds, little prevalency in the conduct of our souls." (75-76)

2. "...if the seasons which are (as it were) due unto such meditations be taken from them, they will be the worst employed of all the minutes of our lives. Vain and foolish thoughts, corrupt imaginations, will make a common haunt unto the minds of men in them, and habituate themselves unto an expectation of entertainment, whence they will grow importunate for admission... That which providence tenders unto their good is turned into a snare; and God doth righteously leave them unto the fruits of their own folly who so despise his gracious provision for their good. If we cannot afford unto God our spare time, it is evident that indeed we can afford nothing at all." (76)

III. "Consider how we are affected with our disappointments about these seasons." (77)

- "A carnal mind is well enough satisfied with the omission of any duty, so it have the pretense of a necessary occasion. If it hath lost a temporal advantage through attendance unto a spiritual duty, it will deeply reflect upon itself, and, it may be, like the duty the worse afterward." (77)
- "But a gracious soul, one that is truly spiritually minded, will mourn under a review of such omissions, and by every one of them is stirred up unto more watchfulness for the future. 'Alas,' will it say, 'how little have I been with Christ this day! how much time hath passed me without a thought of him! How foolish was I to be wanting to such or such an opportunity! I am in arrears unto myself, and have no rest until I be satisfied.'" (77-78)
- "And, indeed, that woeful loss of time that is found amongst many professors is greatly to be bewailed. Some lose it... in vain converse with others, wherein for the most part they edify one another unto vanity." (78)
- "Little do some think what light, what assurance, what joy, what readiness for the cross or for heaven, they might have attained, had they laid hold on all just seasons of exercising their thoughts about spiritual things which they have enjoyed, who now are at a loss in all, and surprised with every fear or difficulty that doth befall them." (78)