

The Grace and Duty of Being Spiritually Minded: Chapters Seven and Eight

1. What does Owen mean when he says, “I had rather be among them, who, in their actings of their love and affections to Christ, fall into some irregularities and excesses in their manner of expressing it (provided their worship of him be neither superstitious nor idolatrous) than among those who, professing themselves to be Christians, do almost disavow their having any thoughts of, or affections to, the person of Christ”? Do you agree?
2. What are the two basic directions which, according to Owen, will help us to “think of Christ as [we] ought”? [Hint: They involve prayer and the reading of Scripture, but try to be more specific.]
3. How is our spiritual communion with Christ “particularly exemplified in the book of Canticles [Song of Solomon]”? How might this book of the Bible help us in our spiritual thoughts of Christ?
4. Why is it crucial for us to recognize that spiritual mindedness is not simply to “have the notions and knowledge of spiritual things in our minds” or “to be constant” in “the performance of duties”, but rather “to have our minds really exercised with delight about heavenly things, the things that are above, especially Christ himself, as at the right hand of God”?
5. In what sense does the following comment by Owen relate to our situation in 21st century America? — “It is very probable that we shall yet suffer more than we have done. Those who have gone before us have done so. It is foretold in the scripture that if we will live godly [lives] in Christ Jesus, we must do so. We stand in need of it, and the world is prepared to bring it on us.”
6. What does Owen mean when he says that “Evangelical truth will not be honorably witnessed to, but by evangelical graces” and that the best preparation for enduring persecution is “Distrust of ourselves, a due apprehension of the nature of the evils to be undergone, and of our own frailty, with continual prayers...”?
7. Did it surprise you to read that, according to Owen (writing in the 17th century) that “never any age since the flood did more abound with open atheism, among such as pretended to the use and improvement of reason, than that wherein we live”? What reasons does he give to explain this phenomenon?
8. Based upon Owen’s characterization of atheism, what is the proper relationship between evangelism and apologetics? — “But the most rational arguments for the being of a Deity will never prove an effectual cure to a predominate love of, and habitual course in sin... And unless the love of sin be cured in the heart, thoughts of the acknowledgement of God will not be fixed in the mind.”
9. According to Owen, what are some key differences between (1) a believer whom God, for his own good, permits to fall into a season of temptation and sin, and (2) an unbeliever whose “ordinary state of mind and affections” includes “the habitual prevalency” of “secret sin or corruption”?
 - A. How could a season of temptation possibly be good for a believer?
 - B. What would motivate someone in the second category to “abide in the performance of outward holy duties”?
10. According to Owen, what does it mean for God’s saints to “give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Ps. 30:4)?
11. In what sense should our spiritual thoughts be characterized by reverence and godly fear? Why is this so important?