

# Meditations of the Heart - Reflections on the Scriptures

*Psalm 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

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## Meditation of the Heart

In considering the life of David, the confessions of David and the earthly consequences of David's sin, I am reminded of the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

The prodigal son made his own problems and felt the sting and stench of his errors. Eventually, that same sting and stench (combined with the memory of his father) are what compelled the young man to return home to his father.

Meanwhile, the older brother did not feel such a shame. He was confident in his actions and his dutiful behavior. Most people in the church are (to one degree or another) in the place of either the prodigal son or his elder brother. They have either made huge problems for themselves, or they have sought to be obedient and are pleased with their actions, at least when compared with the actions of others.

In one sense, such a life of obedience can be good - very good. For example, the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a meditation upon the protection that living according to God's word brings us – protection from the consequences of sin, foolishness and pride. When the psalmist delights in the commands of God, he is not delighting in his own goodness nor in his ability to earn his salvation by living according to such commandments (an ability he does not have). We know this because, even as the Psalmist (of Ps. 119) delights in the commands of God, he also laments the ways in which he has, at times, failed to live according to those same commands. He is delighting in the benefit of living according to God's commands.

There are times in the Scriptures when we see David delighting in the commands of God, and following his infamous sin, we can be sure that he was lamenting his actions and regretting that he had lost that same delight for the word of the Lord.

What we don't see, in either Psalm 6 or Psalm 51 (two prayerful confessions of David pertaining to his sins of adultery and murder and the related consequences), is David delighting in the commands of God *as a means* of regaining the favor of God. For that very need, David leans wholly upon the mercy of God. Pride in any sense of goodness seems to go out the window when one has to face the darkness of their own heart.

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But that is precisely the problem with the older brother in the story of the prodigal son. He was obedient, but he was prideful and even resentful in his 'obedience': *'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'* (Luke 15:29-30). What had his obedience gotten him all these years? What did he think it was supposed to get him?

He neither understood the heart of his own father (who had *"said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"*) nor the prideful and wrong motivation behind his own dutiful obedience.

When we think about the subject of confession, we need to recognize that the 'parable of the prodigal son' is actually misnamed. We should be calling it the 'parable of the father' or the 'parable of the heart of the prodigal's father'. The point of the story is to learn about the heart of God so that we might be encouraged to turn and run to him and confess who we are. We might be surprised by His reaction... And as we grow to know and understand the heart of God, it becomes that much easier to know and understand our own hearts, which frees us to make a more heartfelt and honest confession to God of our need for Him.