

He Meditates Day and Night

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2)

Day and night? Really?

When we think of being awake at night, it usually isn't to "meditate." Some people work late into the night. Others spend their nights "partying." Many of us (too many of us, I fear) lie awake at night fretting over all sorts of troubles in our lives and in the lives of those around us. Then, when we "can't sleep," we stress even more over how that lack of sleep will make us feel the next day.

Yet for most of recorded history, waking up during the night was a normal thing. Until just a couple hundred years ago, "Western Europeans on most evenings experienced two major intervals of sleep bridged by up to an hour or more of quiet wakefulness" (A. Roger Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past*, 300).

It seems artificial light changed our patterns. In one experiment by Dr Thomas Wehr, people deprived of artificial light at night for several weeks went back to the pre-industrial pattern of broken slumber. "Without artificial light for up to fourteen hours each night, Wehr's subjects first lay awake in bed for two hours, slept for four, awakened again for two or three hours of quiet rest and reflection, and fell back asleep for four hours before finally waking for good" (Ekirch, 303-304).

Imagine that: waking up each night in the middle of the night for two or three hours. Some people would visit their neighbors, some would smoke a pipe, some would read or write, some would get a few chores done, some would just sit quietly and tend the fire that warmed the house. And some, following the Psalms in Scripture, would meditate on the Word of the Lord and call upon Him in prayer:

"I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me" (Psalm 16:7). "Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge (19:2). "By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life (42:8). "My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night" (63:5-6). "I said, 'Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart'" (77:6). "My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise" (119:148).

What a comfort! My "bad" sleep patterns aren't so bad at all! And when I do wake in the night, I don't have to fret about those sleepless hours. I can keep company with the Lord through His words, and turn those hours of fretting into hours of blessing!

How should one deal with insomnia and the worries of the night? The way I figure it, if the devil is trying to bug you with sleepless nights, remember God's Words and pray. Then the devil has a choice: he can keep you awake, in which case your meditations will be constructively growing your faith (something the devil certainly doesn't want); or, he can let you go to sleep. Either way, you win.

So delight in God's Word, meditate on it day and night, and enjoy the comfort and peace which we receive only from Jesus Christ!