

Clean is His Own Eyes

Proverbs 16:2

“All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.” - Proverbs 16:2 (Cf. 12:15; 21:2).

Proverbs 16 is an extremely interesting chapter in the Book. There are quite a number of passage or groups of verse throughout the Book that one might “swear” were written by an author from our own day and age. This verse is one of the truths that is put forth that we might be convinced came directly out of the headlines of the past few days. With our Presidential election last Tuesday and all of the turmoil that has gone on day in and day out I have become increasingly convinced (or is it reminded?) that the vast majority of people are far more enamored of their own thinking that they (or is it we?) have any right to be.

*² All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the spirits. (Proverbs 16:2)*

Solomon was very clear, here and in other places, that it is essential that we recognize two things as believers:

- **First**, it is clear that the implication, or the intended application of the verse has to do more with the actions a man takes and where they “come from” or what in the prompting force from inside of them; more than just a question of thinking the right thoughts.
- **Second**, I believe he also wants us to see that in and of ourselves, we are without resource to do and act in a fashion that is acceptable to God and profitable to those around us. We need to pursue God and His Word in order that our “ways” be what they ought to be.
- **Third**, I think we need to recognize the we are not “naturally” right in what we are faced with or are considering/grappling with. Rather, we MUST recognize that it is in our natural makeup to need be instructed and corrected by the Word of God. This what is implied by “*But the Lord weighs the spirits*”

To take this thought just a bit further... “But” is a contrastive conjunction. It ties the first part of the verse to the second part of the verse in a “contrasting” fashion, implying that there is a real difference between the two, different in a virtually opposite fashion.

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The idea is that men trust their own thinking on a matter; BUT it is God Who both has and exercises the evaluation of the promptings and motivations of men. What Solomon is seeking to put forth to his readers is that those two evaluative methods are in conflict with one another. The obvious implication

that there is a path to be taken here, that being that men OUGHT to keep an awareness that their own opinions and evaluations are suspect and often in error.

- **Fourth**, building on what we have said, Solomon is surely implying, at the least, that knowing and putting the truth into action is a possibility or even a fact and reality. Solomon surely intimates that, as students of the Word, we see that God knows the reality of things, even those secrets that belong to us alone, and he (Solomon) desire for us to take real and godly advantage of that knowledge.

Just by way of rehearsing and summarizing the interpretation for the verse — Man is by nature a fool. though this is certainly not a pleasant thing for man/men (note: not males alone, but referring to all of mankind) to

Hence, what is said elsewhere of the individual fool is here applied to mankind in general. His judgment, yea, his conscience, is so warped by sin, that he cannot weigh himself rightly. Accordingly, he is ready to justify, at least in his own eyes, all his ways. But the Lord looks not at the actions alone, but at the hidden motive and principle which underlies them. He “pondereth the hearts.” He “weigheth the spirits.” And much that is approved by man in his own course of life is condemned by “the Judge of all the earth,” as “weighed in (His) balance and found wanting.”

Illustrations.—Balaam was a self-deceiver, who persuaded himself that he was justified in doing that which God had forbidden. To Hazeal, the prophet Elisha exposed iniquity latent within his breast, which, though he repudiated it with horror at that time, he afterwards committed (2 Kings 8:13). The typical Pharisee, so “clean in his own eyes,” was not justified of God. Pilate and the murderers of Jesus imagined themselves clean (Matt. 27:24; John 18:28); and Saul of Tarsus, misled by a misinformed conscience, thought himself acting religiously in the steps he took against the infant Christian Church.

Application.—I do well to ponder the prevalence of self-deception with a view to myself. How can I hope to escape it if I trust to my own judgment? Am I not as liable as others to be unconsciously swayed by passion, interest, or prejudice? Is not my heart as cunning as that of other men to make that which is pleasant appear right? May not self-partiality hide from my eyes what other men see and condemn in me, and much more the heart-searching God? But if I say, “My conscience approves,” have I taken good care to get such instruction and counsel from above, that the “eye” of the soul be “single,” the “light within” be not “darkness”? Alas! what errors, nay, what crimes have been committed in the name of conscience! Ought I not, then, to endeavour to weigh my spirit as God does? It is quite possible with honest purpose of heart to find out what is right in His eyes. He who holds the scales has given the standard by which to weigh, not actions only, but principles. Tried by His Word, I ought to be able to discover what my ways really are. He will aid me by His Spirit and His ministers rightly to apprehend that Word (ver. 3). I weigh a letter in scales corresponding with the imperial test, in order that it may abide that test. Shall I not weigh my motives and principles in “the balance of the sanctuary,” that “Tekel” be not written on

them in heaven? And in so far as I fail, oh, may the righteousness of Christ adjust the balance in my behalf!