

Give Me Thine Heart

Proverbs 23:26

“My son, give Me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe My ways.”

Solomon had, as a favorite mechanism, the use of various family anthropomorphisms, to help his readers to grasp the fuller sense of his teaching in a passage. Such is the case in this verse. He begins by calling to his “son”, using the famous and well-known Hebraism, “Beni” speaking of a young family member; a son or grandson. The emphasis is on one’s membership to the family group, their inexperience and need for guidance, not to mention the dearness of that member to the father figure speaking. We must remember that as in any passage of the Bible, unless specifically and/or clearly speaking of the gender of a person, is making reference to people in general, not either male nor female. This passage is addressing the youth of the one being spoken to and not any gender.

This is actually the Seventeenth saying a series that has been ongoing over the past couple of chapters.

- The prostitute has been compared to a deep pit or well (in that she entraps a young man and he cannot escape; cf. note on 22:14)
- Likewise, this prostitute has been compared to a robber (in that she will cost him dearly).

For Solomon’s purposes, prostitution is used as a striking example of those “personal sins” that, far from affecting the sinner alone, corrupt and bankrupt society and so ruin communities. The first part of the verse, “give me your heart”, guides parents, and so by implication, all men, in their nurturing task: their/our target must ever be the deepest core of the child’s (or those whom we are striving to disciple in spiritual things) inner life. The phrase following, “Observe my ways” further guides the discipler’s path in accomplishing our task.. They must aim to embody the virtues they commend.

Solomon has two aims in the statement he makes here:

1. First he urges his beloved “son” to yield his true affections and dedication to him, making him a sure and reliable relation in his family. This determination will also aid in making him (the one referred to as a “son”) pliable and submissive in the discipleship process and further our ability to lead him to the goal of godliness.
2. Likewise, he urges this “son” of his to see to it that he follows after him in the matters of behavior and his “ways” or manner of living. The active sense here tells us that Solomon is not merely talking about attitude but also to the active pursuit of the goal.

Notice that in both of these matter that he urges his “son” to submit to there is the hint that they are actions that the “son” has the choice and ability to do what Solomon is urging him to do. We, likewise, must see that both we, and

anyone that we are seeking to lead into godliness and following after Christ has the ability to make the choices and take the actions needed of his volition and will. It is not merely a matter of being told what is necessary, it is also a matter of choosing to follow the path that Solomon (or the disciple) is laying out before him.

We note also that Solomon says that this “son” ought to:

...let thine eyes observe My ways.

There is also, then, the implication that, along with the matter of choice or volition, the matter of allowing this “observing” the discipler’s ways to become a part of his manner of living. It is only a single action, but a matter of adopting a manner of life that mirrors a style of living. We do not live a series of actions alone. We are to live a style of life that honors God and brings him glory. This is aim of Solomon in his urging of his son here. An interesting side point here is that Solomon urges his “son” here to follow after his ways in spite of the fact Solomon’s own lifestyle was not exactly the purest that it could have been. But, yet, as we see reflected in the content of the Books of Proverbs and the Song of Solomon, he was certainly a man that knew and loved the Lord, and sought to walk with him, succeeding in such to no small degree.

We have to come to understand that this knowing and walking with Lord is not so much a matter of abstaining from every sin and it is a matter of seeking and loving Him. This is not to say that we can indulge in sin willy-nilly. But the failing of our human flesh and falling into sin does not disqualify us as effective servant of our Lord who can bring Him no small amount of glory. Again, that is not to excuse or give approval to our failings. Rather it is to “understand” the reality of human nature, even redeemed human nature and to seek to see it as God, the maker of men (not merely males, but all human beings) sees them.

Just to think through our interpretation of the verse once again - “A greater than Solomon” is the speaker. For none but the Creator can claim the heart. And certainly the writer of this Book could not point to *his own* ways in warning youth against the seductions of fleshly sins. It is Wisdom personified who again lays siege to the youthful affections, and protests against their being given to such unworthy objects as the harlot and the wine-cup.

As we have observed before, there are a number of illustrations that give light to our ability to make sense of the idea here:

- Caleb and Joshua, who “followed the Lord fully,” contrast (how favorably!) with Jehu, who did not “walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with *all* his heart” (2 Kings 10:31), and with
- Amaziah, “who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a *perfect* heart” (2 Chron. 25:2).
- Samson, dedicated to God, and blessed by Him, and at one time moved by His Spirit, was unhappily seduced to give his heart to strange women, so that “the Lord departed from him.”

- Thinking of Solomon himself, how much happier would it have been for him had he acted out his own words, and “loved the Lord” with *all* his heart, without that fatal “but” and “only,” which marred his life (1 Kings 3:3; 11:1). This is a powerful example to us that it will not do to move on half-heartedly in God’s ways.
- Another powerful example might be the matter of Lot’s wife, who followed the command of God, but turned back at the critical moment.
- We might also think of Orpah who’s example, sadly is of one who turned back just where the road narrows.

By way of application it is beneficial for us to think of the truth that it is surely reasonable that He who created and redeemed me should claim my heart, my WHOLE heart! And what so reasonable on our part as to give it - since to do so, the Scripture makes abundantly clear, is life and happiness? All this I see clearly and admit as true, but alas! Opposing voices too often drown “the still, small voice” within. There are many claimants in life which strive for the heart. Heaven and hell contend for it. The flesh wrestles with the spirit. The world sides with the flesh; and Satan looks on exulting, while “*the darling is given to the lion,*” the heart to the murderer. Not always, however. There are those (and why not I, myself at times at least?) who give themselves in their prime to Jesus, and their “eyes are upon Him” through life. There are others who, late, “too late” yet *not* too late, have wrenched away their hearts from unworthy loves, and laid them bruised and bleeding at the Redeemer’s feet. Nor will He spurn “a contrite heart” - but, as the Scripture here and elsewhere makes clear, only a divided one. God will have all or none. I cannot keep one little corner for the indulgence of any besetting sin. This not to say that we either lose or are cast aside in the shadow of the presence of sin our lives. But we must recognize and admit the truth He will not share His rightful throne with another. Nor can the surrender of the heart be forced. It must be a free gift to our Lord and Master. It is all I *can* give to Him who gave all for me, and we MUST as ourselves the question “Shall I hesitate”? Ah! how often has He knocked at that door in vain! But now—

*Lord Jesus, take my heart, cleanse it and make it Thine; then shall
my eyes observe Thy ways, and my feet walk therein!*
