

Proverbs 23, Dec 3, 2024 -Men's Monday Morning Bible Study

Overview:

Approximately 28 commands; the most in any chapter by my count. Fourteen are positive, fourteen are negative.

Commentary:

FOTL (17) Fearing God is a command to be obeyed. It actually says to be zealous in the FOTL. Don't hold back or throttle this impulse. Instead, go all out. This is compared and contrasted with not being jealous of sinners. This is a great segue into the issue of directing the heart.

The heart (19, & 26; see also "don't desire")

Our culture says to follow your heart. This is absolutely stupid advice because the heart is fickle and changes with age and circumstances. The end is absolute ruin, financially, relationally, and just about every other way. It is short-term thinking and reflects the way of immature folly. It is boyish. Kill the boy. Jeremiah 17:9 says "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Who can understand it?" Our hearts are drawn to sin. Our taste is off as a natural man. It is calibrated to love what is evil and wrong. Do not trust it. Do not follow it.

Instead, train your heart (19). Direct it. Help it to love what is true, beautiful and good. Just like the tongue can be trained to like new things, better things, so can the heart. Do not be jealous of sinners (v17). Do not play the comparison game. Not only is it a joy thief, but it also ends in ruin. Much of directing the heart has to do with directing the eyes or focus. Focus has to do with strategically ignoring everyone and everything else that is not worthy or helpful. Choose to give your heart to what is from God. Phil. 4:8 "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

Let's pair this with v4-5 "Do not weary yourself to gain wealth... it flies away." Chasing stuff and things and money are like chasing the wind. Solomon has much to say about this concept in the next book of the Bible: Ecclesiastes. The common refrain in Ecclesiastes is that it is meaningless, meaningless. Vanity of vanities. Pointless and hopeless. Urinating in the wind. Futility and frustration.

Frustration is the result of unmet expectations. If you chase money, you expect to get it but you only get disappointment and more problems. It's like loving the Cowboys, they always let you down.

Don't give your heart to anything other than God. The flip side is that we are to fully give ourselves to Him and His cause. This takes discipline (v12) "Bring your heart to discipline and your ears to words of knowledge."

(13-14) Discipline your kids on purpose, with purpose, for the glory of God. Teach them not to follow their hearts but to direct and train their hearts for a superlative love. Physical pain now is to spare them from all sorts of emotional, psychological, relational, and physical pain later. Loving fathers discipline their children. Lazy and ignorant fathers are wrapped around their children's fingers. Child centric parenting is ungodly and unloving. Wise and loving dads actively and thoughtfully discipline their children.

V10 is a repeat of 22:28 regarding the ancient boundary. V10b-11 talks about the consequences of taking advantage of widows and orphans by cheating them out of their inheritance. "Their redeemer" is ultimately God. He sees. He knows, and He will judge. Again, in the NT, James 1:27 tells us that true religion is to care for widows and orphans. We should reflect God's heart and defend vehemently with extreme prejudice those who cannot defend themselves. This is one reason why we should be involved politically and vote for just men who execute justice swiftly without favoritism for the rich.

I am certainly no democrat, and their platform is patently opposed to most things Christian with regard to abortion, illegal immigration, and virtue signaling oppression of the poor while calling it help. However, the republicans with a business-friendly stance can also unjustly favor the rich by limiting class action lawsuits, and needs to be careful about tort reform. One of the biggest threats to the poor and middle class is crony

capitalism that uses government to pick winners and losers. This is seen most commonly in pharmaceuticals and the military industrial complex.

Personally, and politically, we need to defend the widow and orphan. Personally, that means that we contribute time, effort, and money to their support and wellbeing. It is not the government's job to support them. It is our job. Politically, it means that we support open markets that promote income growth and opportunities and oppose things that hurt us all and disproportionately hurt those without a provider.

V29-35 are all about the folly of alcohol.

Be careful and default to moderation instead of excess. When in doubt, abstain. I know we are freed up as Presbyterians and not tee totaling Baptists or even Methodists. BTW, the women's temperance movement is an effeminate overcorrection to the problem of male alcohol abuse. Be a man of true temperance and moderation not overcorrecting.

See also: God Gave Wine by Gentry for a thorough Biblical exposition of the topic of alcohol.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for giving us strong hands, backs and heads. Help us to walk in faithfulness and wisdom with justice and compassion. Help us to love what is lovely and hate what is evil. Let our sons and daughters exceed us in their godliness and fervor. We invite Your Spirit to lead and teach us. Bless us for Your sake. In Jesus' name, Amen.