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Dear Friend,

Recently we have been looking at the power of our belief systems. The power that I am speaking of is the power that conforms us to whatever we believe the most. Our belief system is the way we view God, our fellow man and ultimately ourselves. What we believe is simply made up of a multitude of thoughts that we eventually adopt as truth or true to us. This is what forms the heart of a person.

The heart of a man is the place where the true character of a person proceeds. The scripture that we have been looking at is in Proverbs. **For as he thinketh in his heart, so [is] he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart [is] not with thee. (Proverbs 23:7)**

This scripture is warning us about the man that says one thing with his words but his heart is not in what he says. The important thing for us to understand is that it is not what a person says (*in pretense*) but what they do that makes up the essence of a person. Simply put, it is not what you say but what you do that determines what you presently believe. Your doing or your actions will always speak louder than words.

The background study of Proverbs 23 will help you understand the value of what I am saying. Solomon, the man to whom God endowed a great gift of wisdom is trying to teach us a powerful lesson about the disciplining of the flesh, so that it does not follow the basic nature of the world. In **Proverbs 23** it states in verses **1** and **2** - **When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what [is] before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou [be] a man given to appetite.**

The ruler here represents a man that is of the flesh or a man that would rule our flesh through deception. This is why he says, ***“put a knife to your throat if thou [be] a man given to appetite.”*** This is not so you will not embarrass yourself by eating too much in the presence of a dignitary but rather that you are about to be served a dinner of deception. Be careful that you do not dive off into it without discernment. ***“Put a knife to you throat,”*** is a warning to use all precaution not to be deceived.

Verse 3 says, **Be not desirous of his dainties: for they [are] deceitful (or deceptive) meats.** When you eat what is fed to you as truth and digest it as food for nourishment or food for thought, be careful for this can cost you everything.

This is why Jesus highly cautioned us in the following scriptures' to take heed to what we hear.

**If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And he said unto them, Take heed what ye hear: with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given. For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath. (Mark 4:23-25)**

**But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great [is] that darkness! (Matthew 6:23)**

Friend, Jesus was saying that we need to be careful to what we hear and accept as truth, (*authentic doctrine*) from God. The light here is the truth or what we believe as truth. If that which we believe to be true or (*our doctrine*) is darkness meaning if what we have had sown into us as light has darkness in it as in mans reasoning's, slants or biases, if that light is tainted with subtleties of unbelief **"how great is the darkness."** Why? Because now you have become trapped by what you believe. If you have adopted something as truth yet it is error then you have two problems. You not only believe a lie but also are trapped by the lie because when you believe something as truth you will search no further to discover or prove it as truth or error.

**Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for [riches] certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven. Eat thou not the bread of [him that hath] an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: (Proverbs 23:4-6)** these verses are describing the deception that can happen to the flesh when the lusts of the eyes are in full effect. What is in front of you is an illusion. It is not real. Solomon said it can take wings and leave like the eagle.

**For as he thinketh in his heart, so [is] he:** this man of the flesh is saying, **eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart [is] not with thee.** He is in essence saying eat and drink for we have hearts that are alike. The flesh will try to convince the spirit-man that he is indeed in union with him and/or the flesh will continually try to convince us that it is in subjection to the spirit, when the truth of the matter is that his words are merely pretense. He is saying something because it sounds like it's the thing to say or because he has learned certain Christian buzz words yet his heart is not in what he says. In all reality he is not what he is saying in pretense but rather what he thinks in his heart and what he does.

Proverbs 23 goes on to describe this man's heart. His gain of prosperity has come through the extortion of orphans. This system of thought has formed this man's heart and so he has become conformed to the belief system in his heart. It is important for us to understand the observation that Solomon makes here and that it is a truth that applies to every man whether they are righteous or unrighteous. This is a universal truth. The conforming of your whole life rests in what you think or believe in your heart.

Let me give you an example. Someone might hear a strong message on prayer. They may hear and attest to all the benefits attained through a life of prayer. Let's say that initially that it truly does excite them to find there are so many benefits to an active prayer life with God. Let's say this person tells friends and church family how much they relish or believe in the message of prayer but as more and more time passes this individual still has no active prayer life. What does this tell us? This tells us that a person can attest to something in word and still not believe it with

their entire heart. True heart believing has not taken place until they actually begin to conform to it. True to the word of God, they are being as they think in their hearts. If I believe that doing a lot of other things will bring me more help and peace than prayer, then I will continue to do those other things. This person will continue making little or no time for prayer until their heart is totally convinced that prayer **is** the answer.

The way we spend our time will tell of what we truly believe in our hearts. We must be thoroughly convinced of this and that we truly do carry out the actions of the belief systems of our heart. The problem is this. We can easily deceive ourselves into thinking that we totally believe something when in all actuality it is not until we start doing or conforming to that image that we have truly allowed it to invade our hearts.

In verses 13 and 14 Solomon instructs not to withhold correction from the child. **Withhold not correction from the child: for [if] thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. (Proverbs 23: 13-14)**

Even though this is a strong message here about child training I do not believe Solomon has changed the subject but rather is continuing to caution us on the importance of keeping our hearts from deception. In essence he is telling us that our soul is like unto a child and that it is up to us to parent it through the power of the spirit or the new nature. He is saying here what he said earlier in the chapter about restraint. **“Put a knife to thy throat, if thou [be] a man given to appetite.”**

If we understand that our soul or our thought processes are very much like a child. If we take the word of God as the rod of correction we can eventually conform all of our thoughts to the mind of Christ.

Understanding this principle Friend will help you and I lead very productive lives for the Lord. Understanding the importance of conforming our soul to the mind of Christ is imperative for our Christian growth.

In next month's teaching we will distinguish some important facts about the heart of a man and especially the fact that by definition the word *“heart”* is not always referring to the spirit of a man. It can and often is referring to the soul or intellect of a man or his thought processes. Why is this important to us? It is vitally important when you realize your spirit man has no physical hands or feet. What does that mean? It means even if my spirit knows that there is a life changing power in the Word of God and has a desire to be nurtured by it, if the part of the heart which is my intellect and emotions believes that being on the couch and watching television would give me more comfort than the Bible, if that belief system is stronger at the time, my spirit is imprisoned in a body that is subject to domination of ***“as the man thinketh in his heart.”*** My spirit has no physical feet to run into the next room or hands to pick up the Word and begin reading it. It must have the cooperation of the entire man.

This could be scary if you think about how important it is for the soul to be renewed to the word of God. This is why Paul said in Romans, **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies**

**of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1-2)**

But Friend, we can take extreme hope knowing that Christ has made excessive provision to empower us with the ability to subject every part of our heart to Him. Even that part that associates on a daily basis with the outside world.

Through meditation of the word of God the power of transformation takes place in our mind bringing that part of us into the image of the mind of Christ. The thoughts and actions from this place are in harmony with the seat of the nature of Christ which is our born-again spirit. This is why it is so important to spend as much time in the word of God as possible.

What a wonderful experience when every part of our person is working in sync to follow after Christ! When this takes place the parent to the soul *which is the spirit* is in control and the soul is at rest. Then, ***“as you think in your heart you will be”*** (as in the nature of Christ).

Until next month,

Love,

Pastor Bronc