

Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: The Diligent: Proverbs 4:23

Above all keeping, guard the heart from going astray, for out of it are the issues of life. This reference is not only to the arteries which carry the blood to all parts of the body, but also to the evil and good deeds that come from the heart or center of man. When you keep the heart from evil it is a easy matter to obey the other commands of this passage.

Obeying God's will (vv. 20-27). This is a wonderful paragraph to us as a personal spiritual inventory to see if we're really living in obedience to the Lord. Let's ask ourselves:

"What comes into my ears?" (v. 20) Whatever enters my ears will ultimately influence my mind, my heart, and my decisions, so I'd better be careful what I listen to. Paul warns us to beware of "obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking" (Ephesians 5:4, NIV), and Psalms 1:1 tells us to avoid ungodly counsel. When people speak, we must be able to identify God's voice (John 10:3-5,16) and obey what He says.

"What is within my heart?" (v. 23) Whatever the heart loves, the ears will hear and the eyes will see. When our children were small, no matter where we were driving, they could usually find the ice cream shops and the toy stores; I must confess that I managed to locate the book-stores! "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (v. 23, NIV). If we pollute that wellspring, the infection will spread; before long, hidden appetites will become open sins and public shame.

The Bible warns us to avoid a double heart (Psalms 12:2), a hard heart (Proverbs 28:14), a proud heart (21:4), an unbelieving heart (Hebrews 3:12), a cold heart (Matthew 24:12), and an unclean heart (Psalms 51:10). "Search me, O God, and know my heart" (139:23).

Your assignment is not your decision but your discovery

The only way to grow is to challenge are irrational believes. Irrational beliefs are words that we use such as ought, should, must, always or never lead to irrational beliefs.

Never Complain about what you Permit.

Diligent definition, constant in effort to accomplish something; attentive and persistent in doing anything:

Diligent hands are directed by a diligent heart, and this means the discipline of the inner person. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23, NKJV). When we cultivate the inner person through prayer, meditation on the Word, and submission to the Lord, then we can experience the joys of a disciplined and diligent life. "The fruit of the Spirit is ... self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

The reward for faithful hard work is — more work! "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21, NKJV; see Luke 19:16-19). "Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before unknown men" (Proverbs 22:29, NKJV).

The Problem that infuriates you the most is the problem God has assigned you to solve.

One of the blessings of diligent labor is the joy of developing the kind of ability and character that others can trust, thereby fitting ourselves for the next responsibility God has prepared for us. Joseph was faithful in suffering and service, and this prepared him to rule Egypt. David faithfully cared for a few sheep, and God gave him an entire nation to shepherd (Psalms 78:70-72). Joshua was faithful as Moses' helper and became Moses' successor. "Wisdom is the principal thing. ... Exalt her, and she will promote you" (Proverbs 4:7-8, NKJV). "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools" (3:35).

What you are willing to walk away from determines what God will bring to you.

There's no substitute for hard work. "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth" (10:4, NIV). "All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty" (14:23, NIV). A new college graduate was asked if he was looking for work. He thought for a minute and then replied, "No, but I would like to have a job." That seems to be the attitude of too many people today. Poet Robert Frost said, "The world is full of willing people: some willing to work and the rest willing to let them."

The secret of your future is hidden in your daily routine.

Diligent people plan their work and work their plan. "The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty" (21:5, NKJV). "Commit your works to the Lord, and your thoughts will be established" (16:3, NKJV; see 24:27). Thomas Edison said, "I never did anything worth doing by accident, nor did any of my inventions come by accident; they came by work." More than one scientific breakthrough seemed to be discovered by accident, but there was still a great deal of hard work put into the project before the breakthrough came. Benjamin Franklin wrote in his Poor Richard's Almanack, "Diligence is the mother of good luck, and God gives all things to industry."

God blesses the labors of people who are honest. "Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase" (13:11, NKJV). God expects "a just weight and a just balance" (16:11; see 20:10,23). He also expects us to be honest in our words as we deal with people in our work. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight" (12:22, NKJV).

God blesses diligent people for their generosity. "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (11:24-25, NKJV). "He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor" (22:9, NKJV). Mark the difference between the diligent worker and the slothful person: "The desire of the lazy man kills him, for his hands refuse to labor. He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare" (21:25-26, NKJV).

Diligent people are careful not to incur debts they can't handle. "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (22:7, NKJV). While a certain amount of honest debt is expected in

today's world, and everybody wants to achieve a good credit rating, we must be careful not to mistake presumption for faith. As the familiar adage puts it, "When your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep is your downfall."

It's a dangerous thing for people to become greedy for more and more money and to overextend themselves to acquire it. Each of us must discover at what financial level God wants us to live and be content with it. "Two things I ask of you, O Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown You and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God" (30:7-9, NIV).

I was a "depression baby" and the text my sister and two brothers and I learned to live by was, "Use it up, wear it out; make it do, or do without." Our parents taught us the difference between luxuries and necessities, and they didn't try to impress the neighbors by purchasing things they didn't need with money they couldn't afford to spend. But that philosophy of life seems to have almost disappeared. Today if you talk about hard work, wise stewardship, the dangers of debt, and the importance of accountability before God, somebody is bound to smile (or laugh out loud) and tell you that times have changed.

Our Heavenly Father knows that His children have needs that must be met (Matthew 6:32); in our modern society, this means we must have money to procure them. But our most important task isn't to earn money; our most important task is to be the kind of people God can trust with money, people who are faithful in the way we use what God gives us. "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NKJV).

"The real measure of our wealth," said John Henry Jowett, "is how much we'd be worth if we lost all our money." Character is more important than position, and wisdom than possessions. God doesn't glorify poverty, but neither does He magnify affluence. "There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches" (Proverbs 13:7, NKJV).

We must not think that the way of the wealthy is always easy, because there are also perils that accompany wealth and success in life. Wealthy people face problems that people of ordinary means don't face, for an increase in wealth usually means an increase in decision-making, risk-taking, and possibly physical danger. "A man's riches may ransom his life, but a poor man hears no threat" (13:8, NIV). Kenneth Taylor aptly paraphrases this verse, "Being kidnapped and held for ransom never worries the poor man!" (TLB) Thieves will break into a mansion but not a hovel.

One of the subtle dangers of wealth is a false sense of security. "He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like foliage" (11:28). After all, riches won't save the sinner on the day of judgment (11:4); they can't buy peace (15:16-17) or a good name (22:1). Riches have a tendency to fly away when we least expect it (23:4-5; 27:23-24).

If God blesses our diligent work with success, we must be careful not to become proud. "The wealth of the rich is their fortified city; they imagine it an unscalable wall" (18:11, NIV). This reminds us of the rich farmer in our Lord's parable (Luke 12:13-21). If successful people aren't careful, they'll start mistreating people (Proverbs 14:21; 18:23) and becoming a law to themselves (28:11). "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honor, and life" (22:4). Rich people have many friends (14:20; 19:4,6), but will

those friends remain faithful if the rich become poor? (19:7) Wealth is a wonderful servant for humble people but a terrible master for the proud.

The wrong attitude toward money can wreck friendships and even destroy a home. "He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live" (15:27, NKJV). The man or woman who thinks only of getting rich will put money ahead of people and principles, and soon they start to neglect the family in their frantic pursuit of wealth. Expensive gifts to the children become substitutes for the gift of themselves; before long, values become twisted and the family falls apart. How many families have been destroyed because of the distribution of an estate! As a lawyer friend of mine used to say, "Where there's a will, there's relatives."

In connection with that problem, wealthy people have to worry about what their children will do with their wealth. "For riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations" (27:24, NKJV). Solomon discussed this problem in Ecclesiastes 2:18-26 and came to the conclusion that the best thing rich people can do is enjoy their wealth while they're able and not worry about their heirs. Perhaps their will should read, "Being of sound mind and body, I spent it all!"

"Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief." God has a word for all of them. Are they willing to receive it?