

PROVERBS 20

A CLEAN HEART

A clean heart (verse 9)

“Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?”

Behold the great King sitting on the throne of judgment, and challenging every child of Adam: “Gird up now thy loins like a man, for I will demand of thee; and answer thou me!” The questions are confounding, and the answers humble us in the dust. Who can truly say, “I have made my heart clean”? An unregenerated sinner, in his self-delusion, may imagine himself to be a saint. But for a redeemed saint to ever believe that he made himself so – *that is impossible!* Who can say, “I am pure from sin”? What! Not guilty of any vain thoughts? Never had any sinful imaginations? No ignorance, pride, wandering, coldness, worldliness, or unbelief has been indulged? The more we search the secret chambers of our hearts, the more they will disclose their impurity to us.

There are vain boasters who proclaim that they have “good hearts.” But such a boast proves not their goodness, but their blindness! It only serves to reveal that mankind is so depraved that he cannot even understand his own depravity. So what is the language of those persons who have entered into the presence of the Almighty King, Whose holiness scatters all evils away? “Behold, I am vile!” said one. “Woe is me,” said another, “for I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

The clean heart is the heart that has been made clean by Jesus. Although no one can say, “I have made my heart clean” – yet myriads of redeemed souls can bear witness to the blood of the Son of God cleansing their hearts from guilt, and to the mightiness of the Creator renewing them unto holiness! But are there not many who will confess that they are sinners by nature, and yet they stoutly ward off every charge of sin in their lives? How sad! Such persons are not the “heavy-laden” to whom Christ has promised true rest (Matt. 11:28). They are not “the lost,” whom the Son of Man came “to seek and to save.” They will lie down at the side of the cleansing Fountain, but they never care to actually “wash and be clean.” In this Proverb, we observe the fundamentals of the Gospel: man’s total corruption, his inability to make his own heart clean, and his grievous tendency to self-deception – hence his need of the cleansing remedy, and his need to value that remedy rightly. “If I wash thee not,” says the Savior, “thou hast no part in me.” Let us take a moment to pray to the Lord and ask Him to create a clean heart within us, and to make us whiter than snow!

Holiness in childhood (verse 11)

“Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.”

Parents must carefully watch their children’s early habits, temperaments, and actions. Generally, the discerning eye will mark something in the budding

of the young sapling, by which the tree may be known in maturity. The child will generally reveal what the future adult will be. No wise parent will pass over little faults as only childish things. If a child is deceitful, quarrelsome, obstinate, rebellious, and selfish, we cannot help trembling for his growth! But on the other hand, a docile, truth-loving, obedient, and generous child – how joyous is the prospect of the blossom and fruit from this hopeful budding! From the childhood of Samuel, of Timothy, and especially of the Savior Himself, we could not have helped anticipating what their future manhood would have been. Their early purity and right principles promised abundant and blessed fruit.

Are we mourning over the evils that are revealed even in our young children, particularly when we trace them to their original source? Let such mournings be our stimulus to earnest and persevering prayer for the entire change of their heart and nature. Take your child to the covenant of grace! Put the finger upon the parental promise and plead with the Lord, “Remember the word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope!” And although the answer may tarry, wait for it – for it shall surely come! Do not despair of the grace of God. Do not doubt His faithfulness. Bring up your little ones, from infancy, to love and serve the Savior; and pray that all of your sons and daughters – early in their youth – may claim their father and mother’s God as their own Lord for life. And even if they do not do so early in their childhood, do not give up hope; for the prodigal child shall yet return!

A precious jewel (verse 15)

“There is gold, and a multitude of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.”

This is not the standard of the world. To the children of earth, gold and rubies are worth far more than the lips of knowledge. The rich young ruler chose his “great possessions” over the gracious words of the Savior, which arrested the admiration of multitudes. But when gold is our hope and confidence, it will surely be our ruin. Gold and rubies were abundant in Solomon’s days; yet all of these earthly treasures were as nothing in his eyes, in comparison with heavenly teaching. Human wisdom may captivate the imagination, and furnish its measure of useful information. But for the most part, these words die away upon the ear. They do not feed the heart, nor furnish comfort to the afflicted, nor give hope to the desponding. But how precious is the jewel that is found in the lips of knowledge, when the faithful messenger of the Gospel brings his “glad tidings of great joy” to the burdened conscience, and to him “that is ready to perish!” Truly, the very sound of his footsteps is a welcome sound for the sake of the message that he brings!

Lord, our hearts are naturally unclean; but we thank You for giving us a remedy for our cleansing, in Jesus’ blood! Amen.

