

Bible Study - 3/10/09

Julie Kathryn Quest-Brooks

(All Bible references are New American Standard)

I came upon a Scripture the other day while reading the book of Proverbs that has really intrigued me.

Proverbs 12:11 He who pursues worthless things lacks sense (Literally, heart).

What came to me was:

- All we really have in life (both to give to the Lord and others) is our hearts
And yet our hearts so often are shut down, wounded, divided, and even deceived.
- We cannot fully find Jesus until we find our hearts.
- Worthless things keep us from truly "owning" our hearts.

How would you define that which is "worthless"? Give some examples of worthless things.

Think about what it means to "lack heart ." Read Matt 22:37-40 and emphasize the word "ALL" in vs. 37. What does it mean to love God with ALL of your heart?

What gets in the way from loving God with all of our hearts?

We know that according to Ezek 36:25-27, God has given us a new heart. He says, "I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes."

How I read this is ... God give us a new heart by giving us His Holy Spirit. The workings of His Spirit within will (in time) "trump" anything in our hearts that are not in line with His. His Spirit enables us to pray in the spirit, worship in the Spirit, receive gifts of the Spirit, etc. all as a Gift ... a Gift that is not a function of the condition of our heart ... Yet, it is all for the purpose of transforming our hearts to be like His ... which, technically, is the "new heart" we are given ... His heart joined with ours.

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And so, we must cooperate in this process ... the transformation of our hearts to be joined with His.

The other Scripture that I read alongside the one above was:

Proverbs 16:6 By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for.

Iniquity is a word that describes the bent we have to follow our own ways, to be lovers of self more than God, to not respond to God's love.

Recently, Buddy & I have been in contact with a young man (a believer) who fell into some worthless things. He is in crisis and the whole situation is quite a mess. Interestingly, the word that Buddy had for him was this:

"You need to get to the place where you love Truth more than yourself."

Read 2 Thess 2 (with emphasis on vs. 10) and 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5 (with emphasis on 3:2-4 and 4:3). What causes deception according to these Scriptures?

Now contrast the 144,000 referred to in Revelation 14:1-5 (especially vs. 5) with Ananias & Saphira in Acts 5:1-11. How does Truth figure into all of this? In the case of Ananias & Saphira, why were they untruthful (e.g., that was the root of their "sin" ... not withholding their property)?

I say all of this ... not to induce fear that we are deceived ... but to encourage us to constantly be truthful as to where our hearts are ... so as not to be deceived.

Have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus did not condemn so-called "sinners" ... but those who thought they did not have sin (e.g., those that were lying about their sin, those that were pretending at godliness)?

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Deception is not rooted in the sin act itself. It is rooted in pride (e.g., I want to look good, I want to decide the right and wrong of my life and everyone else's, I want to be in control) and then covering up the pride by calling my actions "Right" and yours "Wrong" (which is self righteousness).

Read James 4:5-6 and Psalm 51 (especially vs. 6). What is God's pursuit in all of this?

By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for. Lovingkindness is the word that describes God's Covenant Love, His Love that Pursues Us (Jer. 31:3 I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness). He pursues us even at the cost of exposing areas that are not filled with His Light ... all for OUR GOOD ... so that we become truthful about our own iniquity and that iniquity becomes distasteful to us ... so that we WANT to conform to God's Holy Spirit within ... so that we find our hearts ... so that we find His heart so that we can live and move and have our being in Him (not in perfection, but in Truth) ... so that we can give our hearts away ... as He does ... in Truth. In this, we find Him. In this, we find Life. In this, iniquity is atoned for.

Final Challenges::

If our hearts are all we really have in life (both to give to the Lord and others), what is in the way of you fully finding your heart? Consider the following things: pretending, pride (e.g., wanting your way), pain from wounds, emotional immaturity, walls, actions that are worthless, laziness, or confusion.

Ask the Lord what He would have to do (e.g., next steps) in order to deal with these obstacles. Remember: Any time you give up anything or ask for change, it is for the express purpose of GAINING both your heart and the Life that flows from it.

1 Peter 1:22-23 Since you have in obedience to the Truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.