

“These Things Doth The Lord Hate: A Heart that Deviseth Wicked Imaginations”
Sunday, November 8, 2009
By Pastor Hubert Ulysse

Continuing on the study series based on the sixth chapter of Proverbs, Pastor Ulysse took a deep look at what a heart that devises wicked imaginations is, and how we can guard against having one since it is something that the Lord hates. As Christians, we are claiming to be “Christ Like”. That is what the word means in the first place. So if we are Christians, then we are supposed to love the things that God loves, and hate the things that He hates.

Proverbs 6:16-19

- 16. These six [things] doth the LORD hate: yea, seven [are] an abomination unto him:
- 17. A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18. An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief,
- 19. A false witness [that] speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

To understand what a heart that devises wicked imaginations actually is, Pastor Ulysse went to the dictionary to help each of us understand each component of the phrases. We started by examining what a heart is.

Physically, our heart can be defined as the chief organ of our life. It is small, but is the most important organ of our body. Without it we cannot live. The heart is responsible for carrying oxygen to all parts of our body, and providing it with the strength and circulation it requires to work properly. A disease of the physical heart can kill a person. Millions die of Heart Disease every year. Every person has only one heart, and unless it is replaced through transplant, there is no back up plan for a heart that fails.

But of course the scripture in Proverbs is not talking about a physical heart. It is talking about our spiritual heart. Pastor Ulysse defined the spiritual heart this way: The heart encompasses all of a man’s moral and mental activity. It is comprised of our mind, will, moral character, and directly impacts both our rational and emotional man. Our spiritual heart is the core of our spiritual man. It is the source, and without it our spiritual man cannot survive, just as the physical body cannot survive without a heart as the source of oxygen.

Psalms 22:26

- 26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

This scripture confirms that God is talking about our spiritual heart here. There is no man on earth whose physical heart will last forever. At best, a man can hope to live a hundred years, but after that, the heart does not last. Our spiritual hearts, however, will last forever.

Proverbs 4:23

23. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it [are] the issues of life.

Pastor Ulysse reminded us that the matters of the spiritual heart are matters of spiritual life and death.

Now that we clearly understand what our heart is, what is our imagination? Imagination is the act or power to form mental images of what is not present or has never been experienced. The imagination focuses on things that are not real, and in our minds makes them real for a period of time. Imagination fosters lies as it does not have to concern itself with reality. In the scriptures, as we read about imagination, it is almost always in a negative context.

With a greater understanding of the heart and imagination, what does the phrase, to devise wicked imaginations, mean? The act of devising wicked imagination is to contrive methods of practicing and promoting wickedness. If a crime is committed after having devised wicked imaginations, it means that there was time and forethought put into planning and imagining the outcome. It is premeditated. There is a much steeper consequence if someone has devised wicked imaginations as opposed to someone committing a crime out of anger on the spur of the moment.

Genesis 6:5

5. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually.

When God was looking at the entire earth before the flood, he saw that everyone had their hearts and imaginations set on evil. Pastor Ulysse asked if we thought that the people found themselves in this situation because they intended to let their imaginations take control of their lives. Probably not. It was probably a process that happened over time and took them completely by surprise, and the same exact thing can easily happen to any of us. Do we evaluate and control our daily thoughts? We should. God takes note of everything we think. The Bible talks about how much He loves us and how well He knows our thoughts. It even says that He knows the number of hairs on our heads. God certainly takes note of the things we spend our time letting our minds wander to, and since that is the case, we should be aware and evaluate our thoughts every single day.

Genesis 8:21

21. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart [is] evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

After the flood, we read this scripture in Genesis chapter 8. God knows that the imagination of our hearts is evil from our youth. Our natural instinct is to let our imaginations wander to evil things, and God knows that this is our nature. But knowing

that, He still chooses us to follow Him. He still loves us. He still teaches us in the Bible that we should bring every thought into captivity (II Corinthians 10:5). It's going to be an uphill battle to make sure that we don't allow our hearts to devise wicked imaginations, but if God hates something so should we. And if we hate something, we certainly will do everything in our power not to do it. We must be aware and in control of our thoughts.

Matthew 15:7-11

7. [Ye] hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,
8. This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [their] lips; but their heart is far from me.
9. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men.
10. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:
11. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Jesus is talking to the Pharisees in this passage above. He talks about how they said and did all the right things, but their hearts were not in the right place. Pastor Ulysse reminded us that in the church, we can easily think about this scripture and think about all the "lost people" that are in the world around us who do good deeds, and think that it will be enough to get them into Heaven. If we read this section of scripture and think about all of "those other people", we have completely missed the point. This section of scripture is meant for ALL of us to take personally, and take seriously. Every single day of our lives we need to make sure that we check to see where our hearts are. We cannot just take for granted that we pray, read the Bible, go to church, and volunteer our time, so everything must be right between us and God. This scripture proves the complete opposite. Everyone of us need to take special note to make sure that our hearts are close to God and never drift off (no matter if we are doing the right things with our words and actions or not).

After we read this scripture and are reminded that we have to be aware that our hearts can drift away from God without us even realizing it, it might be a little scary. Read this thought from I John that will be a good gauge to help us know where our hearts are.

I John 3:18-22

18. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.
19. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.
20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.
21. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, [then] have we confidence toward God.
22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

There are things that we may live our whole life without another human being knowing, but our heart will always know and act like a conscience. If we go to God, and our heart has doubts, or reminds us of secret sins that we may be hiding from the world, we have a

reminder to go to God and make those things right. If we have sin in our hearts, God knows. We cannot hide anything from Him. If we go to God and our heart is clean with no doubt or reservation, we have a reason to rejoice that God is holding us close and that we are in His will.

Matthew 12:35

35. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

God looks from the inside out. He does not see things the ways we do, and that is a big part of why we have to make sure that we never have a heart that devises wicked imaginations. In Matthew, we see that every thing in our hearts will sooner or later come out. Even if it never does in this lifetime, God knows our hearts and He is the one who will eventually judge everyone.

Philippians 2:20

20. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Pastor Ulysse talked about what we can learn from this section in Philippians. We can see that Paul knew Timothy's heart and was sure that he would take care of everything in ministry that needed to be taken care of. It was Timothy's heart that made Paul so sure that he would succeed in ministry. If Timothy had a heart that was consumed by wicked imaginations, there is no way that Paul could have had the trust that Timothy would "naturally care for" the church. By Paul's confidence, it's safe to say that Timothy's heart was pure and did not devise wicked imaginations.

After President Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize recently, Pastor Ulysse started doing some research about the beginnings of the Nobel Prize. He took a few minutes to tell us how it began. Alfred Nobel was a scientist that made many contributions to weapons that impacted the world through warfare. One day, his brother died and the local paper made a terrible mistake. They thought that Alfred Nobel had died and they printed his obituary. Imagine his surprise when going to read his brother's obituary Alfred Nobel found his own. He realized while reading it that his greatest contribution throughout the course of his life was bringing destruction and taking life from thousands. He knew as he read it that he had to change the legacy he was leaving. It was that instant that caused a complete shift for Nobel. He began the Nobel Peace Prize and completely changed what he will be remembered for.

Alfred Nobel made a conscious decision to shift his focus. Today, as Christians, we have the same ability to change what we focus on. If we have spent our entire lives devising wicked imaginations, plotting against anyone that stands in our way, thinking negatively, and dwelling on things that we shouldn't, that can all change. It is a matter of choosing to give our thoughts to God and relying on Him for the strength to bring them into captivity. We don't have to be what we've always been. God offers each of us new life

and salvation. God offers us the ability to have a mind and heart that are clean for Him. All we have to do is accept it.

II Corinthians 10:4-6

4. (For the weapons of our warfare [are] not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)
5. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;
6. And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

Dwelling on wrong thoughts is not an option. This doesn't mean that we won't ever have bad thoughts. Everyone does. Remember from the beginning of the notes that after the flood God noted that our hearts are evil from our youth? It's not something that we can escape. There's no point, because that's how God designed things.

Instead, we have to control how we react when we have wrong thoughts. As Christians, we can rely on God for strength and not let our minds get wrapped up in things they shouldn't be. We must be in charge of what we do with every thought that comes into our mind, but we can't do that without the strength we get from God. In the scriptures above, we learn that God's weapons for this are serious. They are strong and can pull down anything that might stand in the way of us keeping our minds and hearts clean for Him.

Even Jesus dealt with the struggle of keeping his mind focused. We can see this unfold in Matthew chapter 4. When the devil came and tempted Jesus, it wasn't a physical presence standing in front of Him, it was a battle in His mind. While he was being tempted, Jesus had to find strength from the Word of God. He didn't rely on what he thought, or what felt right. Jesus knew the scriptures, and when he was being tempted, that's how He got through and kept his mind right, and that's exactly what we need to do as we follow Christ today. We need to know the scriptures, and rely on them as our source of strength instead of getting caught up in what we think or what feels right. If we are going to be like Christ and hate what He hates, we have to have a mind that does not devise wicked imaginations. If we never study the Bible and don't know what it says, how can we fight temptation in our minds? The simple answer is that we can't.

In this study on what God hates, Pastor Ulysse asked this question: What if instead of fighting back and being so determined to win at any cost, we just let some battles pass? Of course he wasn't talking about the spiritual battles we face. They always need to be won. But how about the physical battles we come up against? Some battles in the world are simply not worth winning. Sometimes it is a greater testimony to not fight in the first place and give it to God. He can handle it, and then our mind won't be busy devising wicked imaginations on how to get back at someone, or be distracted by holding grudges.

As we look deeper at the things that God hates, it gives us a greater understanding of what we need to steer clear of if we are going to live lives that please God. We have to learn to control not only our words and our actions, but our minds as well. God takes note of the things that occupy our minds, and we need to too. Allowing our imagination to wander is something that we have the power to control through God's spirit, and we have to do it, because a heart that devises wicked imaginations is one of the things that God hates.