

How Your Today Affects Your Tomorrow

Proverbs 4:20-27

Introduction

1. We are surrounded by a culture which excuses harmful thoughts, decisions, and actions as though the person they belong to bears no fault, while simultaneously praising and crediting positive thoughts, decisions, and actions to the same person.
 2. The Bible is impartial. Whether negative or positive, a person's thoughts, decisions, and actions belong to them.
 3. The Bible does not present a worldview of fate, nor of chance, but one ruled by the sovereign God of omniscience and omnipotence who tells us the end from the beginning and gives us the choice of whether we will go with Him or against Him.
 4. **Proverbs 4:20-27** – wisdom shows us how calculated our thoughts should be, and how our paths should be considered each day.
 5. Every day shapes the following day, ultimately leading to eternity. We must realize the gravity of today so that we are preparing for a blessed tomorrow in union with our God.
- I. Our Decisions Today Develop Our Values for Tomorrow
- A. Each day we are faced with many decisions. We must realize their potential for good or evil, and we must decide with great intent, sobriety and caution.
 - a. **Ephesians 5:15-18** – careful thought must be exercised with the aid of God's will.
 - b. **Circumspectly** – *akribōs* – “pert. to strict conformity to a standard or norm, w. focus on careful attention, accurately, carefully, well” (BDAG)
 - i. Contrast between wine and Spirit.
 - ii. Proper decisions will be made, and rightful actions will be taken, only if the values align. Those values are cultivated by a pursuit of God's will.
 - B. Values are shaped by the decision to pursue a certain kind. Some know what their values should be, but struggle to hold such things as valuable. They must decide now – **Psalm 119:25-32** – he has disclosed his life to God and sought correction and instruction.
 - a. **“For You shall enlarge my heart”** – i.e. to see what is truly valuable, and to so desire it.
 - b. We speak of acquired tastes – God's will should be that which is naturally more attractive than anything else but surrounded by a world of sin we have lost our taste for it and must acquire it again!
 - C. What we are deciding now will shape our values for tomorrow, so we must decide what kind of values we wish to cultivate, and decide accordingly:

- a. **Time** – **Ephesians 5:15-16** – we must make the best use of our time.
 - b. **Environment** – **Psalms 1:1-2** – keeping specific company is not necessary to be in a corrupting environment. Do we subject ourselves to such counsel, etc.
 - c. **Entertainment** – **Philippians 4:8-9** – are we filling our mind with what leads to God, or away from Him?
 - d. **Company** – **1 Corinthians 5:6-8** – some “glory” as though they have the strength to keep such company that is corrupting, but they are wrong.
 - e. These decisions and more will shape our values for tomorrow.
- II. Our Values Today Shape Our Thoughts for Tomorrow
- A. It is a tragedy when one knows what he should value, but rather than cultivating said values he makes decisions that develop worldly values. These ceaselessly produce thoughts contrary to God’s will and values.
 - a. Many times, they have a façade of godliness, whether seeking to deceive themselves or others or both, but their thoughts betray them – **2 Timothy 3:5**
 - b. Their true self is found in the thoughts of their heart – **Proverbs 23:6-8** – the lover of riches may want to appear to be generous, but his greedy thoughts represent his true self, and eating the food he offers will lead to regret.
 - i. **“for he is like one who is inwardly calculating” (v. 7, ESV)**
 - ii. I.e. his generous words don’t line up with his true motives.
 - iii. His value is earthly gain, and his generous show will lead to resentment and bitterness.
 - B. Whether we align our values with Christ’s rule determines how we think in our daily life – **Colossians 3:1-4**
 - a. Some catch themselves with nasty thoughts and wonder why they had them.
 - b. **(vv. 8-11)** – negative thoughts of others, thoughts to hurt and lie, are foreign to Christ’s values, but come if we don’t make His values ours.
 - c. **(vv. 12-14)** – the pure, beneficent thoughts toward others are born by possessing values as those who belong to God.
 - C. The values we decide to pursue and hold lead to transformative thoughts for good or bad, but we have the choice:
 - a. **Romans 12:1-2** – the mercies of God attract us to them, leading to having the value of godly sacrifice, which translates into our resisting the world, and the renewing of our minds.

- b. **2 Corinthians 5:14-15** – Christ display of love changes our values, leads to self-denial, and thoughts of service to Him and others.

III. Our Thoughts Today Lead to Actions Tomorrow

- A. A typical question after one is caught in a scandal is, “What were you thinking?”
A typical response to the question is, “I just wasn’t thinking.”
 - a. Culture has made this nearly a natural response but further thought shows how untrue it is.
 - b. Most of our actions are products of a line of thoughts and reasonings – if my initial reaction to something is without much thought, it is because I’ve already done the thinking beforehand!
- B. Jesus demonstrated where actions come from – **Matthew 12:33-37; 15:18-19**
 - a. **12:33-37** – their accusation against Jesus was illogical and foolish, but its because their thoughts about Him were evil and dishonest.
 - b. **15:18-19** – the worst kind of actions do not just happen. They come from what a person has let into their heart and kept there.
- C. The worst crime ever committed in human history was the product of a thought leader – **John 11:45-52** – greed and envy led to the thought that the death of an innocent One would be “expedient,” which led to His brutal murder.
- D. Two figures in the Old Testament demonstrate the power of our thoughts, and how they lead to our actions:
 - a. **Achan** – **Joshua 7:19-21** – Achan’s response to “what have you done?” included what led up to it – saw, coveted, took, hid.
 - i. NOTE: His values should have been shaped by the previous prohibition, and that would have kept him from the covetous thought – **Joshua 6:18**
 - b. **Daniel** – **Daniel 1:8-16** – Daniel’s values cultivated by God’s will led to his thoughts to avoid defilement, leading to actions of persistence, and God’s aid.
- E. We truly have no excuse for our actions because they are a product of prior decisions, our values, and our thoughts.

IV. Our Actions Today Have Lasting Consequences for Tomorrow

- A. The Devil is good at deceiving us into thinking that actions can be isolated instances which have no residual effects.
 - a. I can give in now, ask for forgiveness, and move on from there.
 - b. This misunderstands the gift of forgiveness – it is meant to be transformative, not as a device to experience pleasure without consequence.
 - c. I need to realize the lasting effects of my sin, even if I receive forgiveness.

- B. A decision to sin chips away at my identity as a child of God – **1 John 3:4-9**
 - a. **(v. 4)** – God’s law reveals Himself, and to adhere to it is to engage in fellowship with Him – sin matters.
 - b. **(vv. 5, 8)** – Christ’s goal was not simply to forgive, but to destroy sin and its power.
 - c. **(vv. 6-8a, 9)** – our actions of sin or righteousness align ourselves with God or against Him.
 - d. NOTE: **“sin”** – present, active – **“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning...” (v. 4, ESV)**
 - i. This is a part of the lie Satan tells us about one sin – it’s hardly ever just one.
- C. Actions of sin or righteousness are built upon with more of the same, whether we acknowledge it at the time or not – **Romans 6:12-23** – Paul’s warning about Christians turning back to sin when they are meant to be united with Christ’s resurrection.
 - a. **(vv. 12-14)** – actions are the product of decisions to present ourselves to that action.
 - b. **(vv. 15-16)** – what we present ourselves to obey becomes a reigning master.
 - c. **(vv. 17-19)** – Christ freed us from bondage to increase in righteousness – to not only stop a downward trajectory of exponentially increasing sin, but to launch us toward holiness.
 - d. **(vv. 20-23)** – the actions we take today have eternal consequences – the fruit of eternal death or life.
- D. Paul’s description of judgment tells us that our actions have lasting consequences – **2 Corinthians 5:9-11** – things done in the body will be given corresponding reward, good or bad.
- E. Do not underestimate the power and lasting consequences of each action you take today.

Conclusion

1. It is imperative that we pay careful attention to what we are thinking and doing each day.
2. If we are citizens of heaven, children of God, and servants of Christ we will realize that each day is incredibly important and full of potential for tomorrow.
3. Let us live with godly intent, and faith in Christ to direct our steps.