

Character of Heart

Proverbs 4:23

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

The connection between our thoughts and our heart cannot be denied because it is one of the most memorable illustrations/parables that Jesus put before His disciples and the Jews that listened as He spoke. When questioned by the Pharisees about why His disciples didn't wash their hands before they ate, Jesus said this, "¹¹ *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man...*"¹⁵ Then answered Peter and said unto him, *Declare unto us this parable.* ¹⁶ *And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?* ¹⁷ *Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?* ¹⁸ *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.* ¹⁹ *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:* ²⁰ *These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."* King Solomon instructs us that just as we are to guard our minds and what we think, we are also to guard the heart and protect it from what we may FEEL and then unwisely say. We unwisely may believe that "As long as I'm thinking it, I might as well say it." That is wrong because that means that I am not guarding my heart and conversely, I'm not guarding my mind. A LEO wears armor protecting his/her chest from attack. Why? It is because they realize that guarding the heart means that they are also guarding their life. Jesus told the disciples, the Pharisees and anyone else listening that guarding the heart meant that they were also guarding their life, their spiritual life.

I. ON GUARD

(a) **It Ain't Mine**: Y'all know that I used to watch "LIVE PD" before everyone went crazy over what happened in Minneapolis. But it seemed like that every time the police found drugs or something illegal in a car/truck they always heard the driver say, "It's not mine, I'm holding it for a friend."

1. Solomon said that this is your heart, and it is your responsibility to 'keep' (guard) it.

a. But here is another meaning for 'keep' that is a sign for our times today. It also means 'monument'. Monuments are put up to honor those that we may view as being noble or doing something noble.

Scottish preacher Alexander MacLaren said, “Without guarding our hearts, no noble life is possible.” Honorable, righteous or moral life isn’t possible if we don’t guard the nobility of our hearts and erect our hearts, not as ‘gods’, but as living examples of what Jesus Christ can do with the life that is determined to do what is right no matter what.

b. Solomon wrote again in Proverbs 23:19, “*Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.*”

Illustration: MacLaren again says, “The Old Testament psychology differs from our popular allocation of certain faculties to bodily organs. We use head and heart, roughly speaking, as being respectively the seats of thought and of emotion. But the Old Testament locates in the heart the centre of personal being. It is not merely the home of the affections, but the seat of will, moral purpose.”

(b) **It Ain’t Cheap**: “...*with all diligence*...” Interestingly enough, ‘diligence’ also means ‘*a deposit*’. In other words, the guarded heart is of extreme value to the one who sees its worth. Guarded hearts, like diamonds or emeralds, are rare.

1. Listen, if the heart (soul) wasn’t valuable then Heaven and Hell wouldn’t be at war over the human heart! One of the most powerful questions that Jesus ever asked was this, “*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Matthew 16:26)

2. Peter wrote, “...*I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...*” (1 Peter 2:11)

3. Paul wrote to Timothy, “*Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.*” (1 Timothy 4:7b-8)

II. OUR LIFE

(a) **As a Source**: Who you are is what you are. We studied this in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount when He told the crowds that you are the source (tree) of your fruit. The good tree and bad tree both bears fruit. Which are you?

1. Your heart is the tree of your life, and from that tree is where you act as the source of faith. Not just your faith, but a living faith that others are to see.

To be a Christian is not only to believe the teaching of Christ, and to practice it; it is not only to try to follow the pattern and example of Christ; it is to be so vitally related to Christ that His life and His power are working in us. It is to be “in Christ,” it is for Christ to be in us.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd Jones

John 13:15 *For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

Psalms 42:1 *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

Philippians 1:21 *For me to live is Christ...*

Colossians 1:27 *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:*

a. Let's listen to the last portion of that verse from another translation.

*Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow **the springs of life.***

- Living water
- Refreshing water
- Cool water
- Bountiful water
- All as a source of the springs of life

2. Now, what if you aren't a source of living water? In your faith, what if others don't see water but instead, they see a barrenness that is neither refreshing or cool or bountiful? How does that testify to the character of heart and soul?

Hosea 10:12 *Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.*