

*Guard Thy Heart*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Never before has it been so vital for Christians to understand the importance of guarding one's heart. These thoughts, which were originally published in 1985, ring as true today as they did then. If anything, the satanic assault upon Bible-loving Christians has only grown more intense.

This message is based upon the principle of Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Many Christians have answered the cry of God in Proverbs 23:26, "...give me thine heart," by giving their whole heart, without reservation, to the Lord.

Every believer must learn how to keep, guard, and protect his heart. It is our desire in this booklet to shed light from the Word of God on the subject of guarding our hearts.

## Chapter One

# THE FUNCTION OF THE HEART

Anything that is placed above the Word of God is a form of idolatry. Whenever you have a problem and it is magnified or exalted over the preeminence of the Word of God, it may become a substitute for doctrine. As we study the principle of guarding the heart, we will see how the mental attitude of idolatry can easily be prevented.

Proverbs 4:23 is a key verse relevant to the subject of the heart, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” The word “heart” in Hebrew is *leb* and in Greek is *kardia*. A few of the most common meanings of the word “heart” imply that it is:

- the seat of the intellect, mind, intentions, and purpose;
- the seat of feelings and affections;
- the seat of intelligent thinking;
- the processor of the entire operation that

- goes through the soul;
- the center of our being;
- the frame of reference with the memory center;
- the conscience with vocabulary and experience, which is one part of the mentality of the soul.

Concerning the mentality of the soul, the Word of God first enters into the *nous* or the preparative area of the heart. In the *nous*, the receiver of doctrine becomes aware of the meaning of the doctrine that he is perceiving. He perceives the particular truth and then, by faith's response, truth is channeled into his heart.

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard" (Hebrews 4:2).

When we have received the Word and mixed it with faith, the Word of God is locked into the frame of reference and ready to be recalled in the conscious mind by way of the Holy Spirit.

"He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:26, 27b).

"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of

mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:14).

When we guard our hearts as partakers of His Word (2 Peter 1:4) and are continually filled with His Spirit, the Holy Spirit is then free to execute His office work according to John 14:26.

### *The Processor of Operations*

Understanding these definitions will help the believer to value this subject more intensely. We are defining "the heart" as the center of our intellect, mind, purpose, intentions, motives, feelings, and affections—the processor of all the operations that go on in the activity of the soul. Therefore, it is important to consider the meaning of the words "keep thy heart" (Proverbs 4:23).

The word "keep" in Hebrew means "to guard." In Hebrew grammar, the verb is the most elaborate part of speech, and to understand any sentence it requires our chief attention. In Proverbs 4:23, a thorough study of the verb "to keep" reveals that the believer is to go right on guarding his heart, the place where he derives his very life. He continues to guard his thoughts and his affections in the part of his soul that processes God's life.

"The entrance of God's Word gives light"



(Psalm 119:130). We should consider the importance of this word “keep” and allow what we hear from the Word of God to have entrance into our hearts. The question is, has this doctrine had an entrance? If the truth of God’s Word on a particular subject has entered our hearts, then we must guard it.

## *Chapter Two*

# PROTECT YOUR HEART WITH A DERIVED LIFE

A philosophical trend in evangelical Christianity today does not accept divine viewpoint as factual. This trend of intellectual independence says, "I will do my own thinking because I am an individualist."

A true individual does his own thinking by thinking with the Word of God as a believer-priest (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6). God has given each believer this freedom and protection. The believer thinks through the Cross. He declares, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live" (Galatians 2:20a). The process of his thinking should always be based on a derived life:

"Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20b).

Thus, we have the distinction that, unfortu-

nately, it isn't being made today: Do not follow your heart, for it is deceitful and desperately wicked, as defined in the following verses:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matthew 15:19).

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Proverbs 28:26a).

### *Follow the Word*

"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Galatians 5:24).

The believer must follow God's Word; he must follow God's thoughts. He can do nothing of himself without God's thoughts nor can he do anything apart from God (John 15:5). But those who do not continue in God's thoughts always pursue the desires of their own hearts. They do not understand Galatians 5:24. They do not understand the fact that we can do nothing apart from the Cross and the life of Christ we received there.

When a person becomes involved with opin-

ions and thought patterns that are not derived by going humbly to the Cross, he always comes out a loser. But when he goes to the Cross, he begins to derive the life of Christ through the Word of God. As a result, he thinks objectively with divine thoughts, and he is restful and peaceful in his decisions.

In Matthew 11:29, Jesus Christ said, "...learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Every believer must learn of Christ as he learns to guard his heart, keeping his heart "with all diligence..." (Proverbs 4:23).

The expanded picture revealed in the Hebrew text in Proverbs 4:23 is to "keep guard." The meaning is explained in two different contexts: first, as a prisoner behind bars guarded twenty-four hours a day by watchmen outside of his cell; second, as the household of a king also guarded twenty-four hours a day from without and from within. When we guard our hearts, the flesh cannot be let out of jail—it cannot be controlled by jealousy, envy, hostility, or caustic reaction. When we guard our hearts, insecurity will not be allowed to rule our emotions. Bible doctrine is the guard, and the Holy Spirit is the protector and the provision.

## *The Guardian of Our Souls*

In 1 Peter 2:25, Jesus is the Shepherd and Bishop, or Guardian, of our souls. Jesus guards us as the Living Word, and the Holy Spirit guards us as the powerful Provider—Christ's representative in the soul. Our volition gives consent so that we are actively involved in the provision, the protection and the preservation of truth. These are details of doctrine.

We should never say anything that would cause division or sow discord in the Body of Jesus Christ. This would allow something of the flesh into the heart. It would allow something to take place in the thought patterns that should never occur. When that happens, the believer stops guarding his heart; he has taken the emphasis off protecting the heart. When we get up in the morning, we should guard our hearts. We must be very conscious of what we are going to think, say, and do. That is what it means to guard your heart. As we follow this process, we become individuals who live a life honoring the Scriptures.

### *Chaper Three*

## KEEP YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE

The word “diligence” is *mishmar* in the Hebrew. It means to do something “above all things.” In other words, the believer keeps what he has already guarded above everything else he does.

“Diligence” also means to watch, protect, and preserve with conscientiousness, to be keenly aware and attentive. Therefore, the believer’s attitude should be, “I have learned something specific in the Word of God, and above all else I’m going to keep it.

Having an attitude of diligence goes far beyond the simple phrase “to keep.” “Keep” means “to guard,” but “with all diligence” means much more. It means, for example, to guard Bible doctrine as our heritage of the Finished Work. “...He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness...” (Psalm 23:3*b*). The diligent believer

wears this path down until he knows it thoroughly. When the believer “keeps” his heart, he “guards” it. He keeps doctrine, and he allows doctrine to have control over every area of his life.

Everything he hears and thinks has to come under the scrutiny of what he knows is right according to the standard of God’s Word. He not only keeps what he has, but he diligently guards what he has. Nothing can cause him to rationalize away or lose the value of what has already been added unto his soul. A husband or wife cannot keep it for him. A best friend or the pastor cannot keep it for him. I am to keep what I have. Yet, more than to guard what I have, I am to keep the very details of it. Everything comes under the scrutiny of this protection.

### *Mentally Living in Truth*

“And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying” (Genesis 37:11).

When God revealed certain things to Joseph in a dream, his brothers reacted with jealousy, but his father Jacob “observed the saying.” The Bible says that we keep or observe what we have guarded in our mind. The believer “keeps” the Word in his frame of reference, conscience,

and mental perception by mentally choosing to live in truth. The Holy Spirit is then able to bring Bible doctrine to the memory center as we apply our hearts to understanding (Proverbs 2:2).

When doctrine enters our mind and becomes our frame of reference, we must be determined to keep the details of it. We “keep” the specifics of Bible doctrine by deliberately walking in the Word of truth (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:133). Jesus Christ is the Bishop of our souls, and the Holy Spirit is our Revealer, Protector, and Comforter. Categorical doctrine is our objective guard; it provides specific definition in details.

### *The Purpose of Having Categories of Doctrine*

We refer to “categories of doctrine” as verses of Scripture divided into specific topics, much like a catalogue, to quickly reference when we face specific situations. If, for example, we are faced with an issue of deception, our hearts have been exercised in verses that speak to that subject. We have mentally worn a path in the part of our mind that processes the truth we have received so we can apply it readily.

Therefore, as our will consents to this process of guarding, we apply the Word, with



understanding, to every situation in our lives. We appropriate the Word of God through the Holy Spirit in practical situations, wherever and whenever it is needed.

Many people have much doctrine in the perceptive area of the mind—the *nous* (the preparational part of the mind)—but they have not learned to apply it to their hearts in faith. Each believer who stands before God must learn to apply and transfer doctrine to every aspect of his life in relationship to other believers, personal decisions, the local church, his spouse and children, and his pastor-teacher, as well as in the duties of his occupation. He applies what he has guarded and kept. When the apostle John wrote in 2 John 8, “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things,” he was referring to that which the believer has been “keeping and guarding” in his heart.

## *Chapter Four*

# WISDOM: THE GREAT PROTECTOR OF THE HEART

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee” (Proverbs 2:10-11).

We define wisdom as the application of doctrine, with understanding, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Proverbs 2:10 says that wisdom enters into the heart. Wisdom is more than simply knowledge or information. It is more than being able to challenge someone with an intelligent argument. Wisdom is more than an ego trip of learning. Rattling off verses and mastering the Hebrew and Greek languages is no indication that a person possesses wisdom.

Original language study is only one of seven principles of hermeneutics (which is the science of studying Scripture). Clear thinking and freshness are also very important. It is vital that

preachers learn this principle. They must not preach with an imbalanced emphasis. Sermons, at times, must be heart-devotional as well as exegetical and expository. In order for a congregation to follow Christ with fervency, they must be motivated by the love of God in their hearts.

Hermeneutics also teaches that a preacher must not practice plagiarism; he should not copy another pastor's style. The pastor must learn to think for himself. The church does not need robots; it needs pastors who can think, who have their own ministry and devotional life with God. Otherwise, secondhand ministries are produced rather than unique portions of the Corporate Body.

One must be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is not wrong to obtain thoughts from great men of God, if those thoughts are meaningful and relevant. But seed thoughts should be used only to the extent that they are relevant. They should never be used beyond this balance. The pastor must develop his own vocabulary and freshness, apart from the resources from which he draws.

### *Take Heed How You Hear*

Listeners need to be careful how they hear

(Luke 8:18), what they hear (Mark 4:24), and when they hear (Ecclesiastes 5:1). When a pastor delivers an amazing presentation with great fluency and intellectuality, will your “intelligence” be stimulated because of his particular style of preaching?

What if a missionary speaker came to your church without all the flowery rhetoric but as a soul-winner who simply serves God? He is someone who has been with Jesus. He has prayed in the middle of the night. He may not be a polished speaker—he may take time between words as he quotes John 3:16 and then simply say, “You know, Jesus loves you.” He is so dependent upon God to speak quietly and humbly in the Spirit that he does not care if you had to wait for him to bring the next word. He is not impressed by your wealth or position. He loves you, but you do not impress him. He has a relationship with God that is his own. What would be your response to him?

God wants us to have a heart relationship with Jesus. Of course, we learn and receive truth from many portions in the Body of Christ, but He wants us to develop a very deep heart relationship with Him so that we can constantly live with a divine heart language. When we “guard”

the content of the Word that has already entered our heart and we keep what we have guarded, then wisdom becomes much more than mere knowledge and information.

Mere knowledge is no longer the focal point of a sermon. A preacher's heart must be filled with the spirit of love, compassion, and spontaneity with God for this day. His portfolio may be filled with pages of learning, but if his message does not reflect God's heart for the moment, then he has missed a vital point. He may need to change a sermon topic at the last moment and not say a word concerning the topic he spent hours preparing. Why? It is not God's heart for that moment. He needs to preach what is on the heart of God, the new creation heart of the Spirit, which is doctrine.

This does not mean the studying is wrong. A man of God must be prepared, but that includes living a prepared life. Information must become wisdom. Godly wisdom goes beyond mere human wisdom. The wisdom of categorical doctrine in the power of the Holy Spirit controls the heart, the memory center, and the mind as it saturates the soul, protecting it from ungodly influence by upholding the truth.

*Chapter Five*

## PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

“He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live” (Proverbs 4:4).

How does the heart retain God’s Word? Let me illustrate it. I get up in the morning, and I am very tired. I am very thankful, very happy, and very grateful, but very tired. I have class at 8:00 a.m., which means that I have to study at 6:00 a.m. Therefore, since I do not want to be filled with information or communicate because of duty, this is what I do:

I pray, “Lord Jesus, I want to practice Your presence. Holy Spirit, I want to practice Your presence.” In my prayer, I kneel at the Cross. I see the nails in His hands, the nails in His feet, the crown of thorns, the disfigured face, the eyes of the heart of Scripture through a man called Jesus, who is dying in my place, piercing me

with love. I will say no more. I will respond to His love and practice His presence. Everything He did, everything He went through, it was all for me. There is no weakness or disturbance or frailty that can come up against His love. I am practicing, simply, the presence of Christ.

### *God Speaks to Us Throughout the Day*

When I have finished studying and praying, I teach the 8:00 a.m. class. It is another morning filled with a busy schedule. During a portion of the class, the Holy Spirit brings to remembrance a very special part of my morning time with Jesus. In an instant, I stand broken before the Lord. I am not interested in information—except as it enhances the Word of God. The Spirit of God recalls doctrine that I retained in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the power of love, and in the power of the Cross. A retention capacity has been established in my mind by practicing the presence of God.

But, what if a pastor gets up in the morning and races to the desk to study, races to get his clothes on, and then races to class? He has lost something valuable. He is doing the best he can, but he has lost something special. He has missed a fresh revelation of the Cross for that day.

The Cross is our ultimate frame of reference and the Holy Spirit of Resurrection is our power. A believer can practice the presence of God ten times a day and become broken each time, while someone else may take God's presence for granted. All believers should be challenged to practice the present reality of the Cross each day. The Holy Spirit will take over each time.

The Savior will break the heart of the pastor afresh. The man of God will not teach something that he has taken directly from a book; rather, he will communicate the revelation of a Person, in the Spirit. So many pastors are anxious to communicate the new heart! We should not compare preachers' capacities, talents, gifts, or knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek. Of greater interest should be our own heart attitude with the Master for this day.

"Guard your heart with all diligence." Let wisdom enter into your heart. Retain the Word in your heart. Proverbs 4:21 instructs us to keep God's words in the midst of our hearts. He is saying to us, "Do not let anything enter into your heart except the Word of life." Do not allow personalities, failure, persecution, accusations, intimidation, emotions, negative thought patterns, or projections to enter your heart. Let only



true words of life enter into the midst of your heart, and keep them there.

Do not allow difficulties, domestic affairs, finances, or business to take over your innermost heart. It is not worth it. Do not become intimidated or condemned. We must do the best we can, and if everything seems to fail, we should put our shoulders back, look unto Jesus, and say, "I gave it my best. I am not condemned because I have guarded and retained God's wisdom in the midst of my heart." This is what it means to practice the presence of God while guarding your heart.

## Chapter Six

# GATEKEEPING

“Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 17:21).

“Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God” (Joshua 23:11).

“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7a).

Take heed that you do not begin to love your life so much that you become religious to protect your interpretation of God. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. In this verse, the word for think is *shaar* in Hebrew. *Shaar* in the Old Testament has the preferred meaning of the word “gate.” A gate can shut out, keep in, or allow entrance to anything that the gatekeeper desires. The second meaning of “thinketh” speaks of an “estimation,” the third meaning speaks of an “evaluation.” And the last portion of Proverbs

23:7 says, "...but his heart is not with thee."

Here we have a picture of a gatekeeper. He has the option of closing or opening the gate to his mind. This is the first option of thinking. Every individual can think whatever he wants to think. When he does not want to think, he simply closes off his thought life. The depth of the meaning of the word "think" is unique. A pastor faces it repeatedly with members of his congregation who try to get circumstances and situations and people to counsel them instead of getting their hearts right by having right thought patterns.

### *Rescuing is not Recovering*

Secular psychology implies that a counselor, psychiatrist, psychologist, or pastor must pamper people to rescue them. At the point that a counselor becomes a "rescuer," he also becomes a liability to the person he is counseling. This means that a person may come to a psychologist, and the only relief he receives after twelve months is what he receives from each session. Yet, if his behavior never changes, the counselor is playing the role of the "sole rescuer." The problem is that in every crisis he faces, his counselor becomes the "rescuer." In actuality, he is

hurting the one being counselled.

Through loving compassion, identification, understanding, and proper wisdom, the counselor must become a loving communicator rather than a rescuer. He must know when to back off as the rescuer and lead the person to the Cross. Only Jesus Christ can deliver him.

The counselee, also, must not overly depend upon a growing relationship with his counselor, but simply receive his compassion and concern to the measure it is needed. If the counselor is effective, he will lovingly and progressively communicate to the counselee that Someone is far greater than he is. He will communicate life and truth to his heart. He will introduce a new relationship in the presence of God that will enable a person to embrace God in his own heart, while being thankful for the counselor who helped him to discover Christ.

It is wrong for a pastor to play the role of one who rescues, but it is right for the pastor to be personal, compassionate, and patient in bringing people into a heart relationship with God through love.

The entire purpose for counseling deals with the heart and nothing else. Counseling involves much more than implementing a technique or a

set of instructions; it involves something far greater—which is love, power, practicality, concern, identification, and oneness with God. This is the principle we must communicate through practical truths, in God’s wisdom. Then the entire process becomes one of wisdom in its fullness.

### *Healing Thought Processes*

Some people use their capacities for thinking incorrectly, and this causes problems. They bar certain things from entering into their hearts—things that they need—and allow other things into their hearts that they do not need. Over a long period of time they may have lived in patterns of wrong thinking. The godly counselor, therefore, must teach them God’s Word progressively and systematically in categories that they can easily apply in the details of life. The counselor must invest in them with a personal love.

“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” No wonder Jesus said in Proverbs 23:26, “My son, give me thine heart”! Today, He is still speaking to us:

“You may have given Me your talent, but not your heart. You have given Me your educational desires, but not your heart. You have

learned theology, but you have not given Me your heart. You have been a choir member and a Sunday school teacher, but you have not given Me your heart. You can recite Scripture fluently, but you have not given Me your heart. You have been to church faithfully, but you still reserve your rights to yourself. You have not yet given Me your relationship with regard to the local assembly. You have given Me a part of yourself, but you have reserved the pride and independent rights of a fleshly individuality. Therefore, My son, give Me your heart!"

Many Christians say, "God, I will give You this much of myself, but I need to preserve my finances. I need security." They forget that the measure to which they preserve and hold back from God is the measure to which they will not be blessed in other areas of their lives. In this same measure, problems will haunt them. The Creator asks only one thing from man—"My son, give Me your heart." Only then, when it belongs to God Himself, can a man guard his heart.

## CONCLUSION

“Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Proverbs 20:9). Such a person follows God with his whole heart; he has a heart after God. In the New Testament, one word for “think” is *enthumeomai*, which is used in Acts 10:19. This word means to consider what you have heard in the deepest thoughts possible—to ponder, deliberate, and to let it revolve in your mind.

Let God’s Word become wisdom in your heart. Retain His Words in your mind. Let the Words of God dwell in the midst of your heart. As a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7a). Be careful how, what, and when you hear. Guard truth, keep it, and then guard what you have already attained by faith in the Word of God.

Any man or woman can change in a moment. You have often heard it said, “I need more time to grow in this area of my life,” or, “Just

give me more time and I'll love my husband"...or fellow Christian...or lost souls. But the truth is, you do not need more time. You need to give your whole heart to Christ *in* time.

For us, life is a supernatural involvement that leads to a supernatural resurrection. We do not need to wait in order to be changed. Rather, we are changed to the degree that we think with the Word of God (2 Corinthians 3:18). So, let us guard our hearts with all diligence. Continue to allow the Holy Spirit entrance by taking heed to every Word of God. That is how our ways are cleansed, and that is how we bring glory God, which is our purpose for living.