

Guard Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23 New American Standard Bible 1995

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

Introduction

This morning, I will continue my sermon series on the heart: how to guard our hearts.

Recap of the Last Week's Sermon

1. Remember that the heart is the innermost seat of emotion, will, thoughts, and appetites. It is an open bowl where all the thoughts freely come and go. Three parties have access to your heart: you, the devil, and God. It is also a battleground where God and the devil vie for your worship, affection, and devotion.
2. Remember that you're the sole caretaker of your heart. You are the guardian appointed by God and your heart is a ward under your protection. Your job is simple yet very important: to keep your heart safe and secure.
3. I am sure every one of us wants to take good care of our hearts. A healthy and strong heart begins with our desire to provide excellent care to the heart. Unless you desire to take care of your heart, no one will. Even God cannot help you on that. Why? Because God honors your free will. He never overrides your free will. E.g., If a homeowner refuses to lock the doors, then, even the best security system won't help. If you neglect your heart, even God will not force His way in. The neglected heart becomes confused, unruly, and eventually you suffer the consequences thereof. Evil things will be stored in your hearts, Jesus says, and they will march out and defile you (Mark 7:21-23). So today, building on the last week's message, we are going to talk about **three practical ways** to guard the heart.

Content

Today's verse expounded:

The first half of today's verse reads: "*Watch over your heart with all diligence.*" The literal translation of the original Hebrew is: Above all guarding, **guard** your heart.

Definition of "to guard": "*to protect property, places, or people from attack or danger*" (Oxford Dictionary). We all protect something or some people from attack or danger. A question: *what do you guard?* *Life, health, wealth, house, bank accounts, investment portfolios, family, jobs, image, identity, and so forth.* One thing is for sure: no one

guards anything worthless. We only guard something precious, valuable, and essential. So, out of all things worthy of our guarding, which one does God command us to guard *most*? The heart. Our heart is the number one priority to protect. Guard it fiercely.

Why the Heart?

The second sentence of today's text reveals the reason why we must guard our heart above all things. Once again, the English translation reads: *For from it (the heart) flow the springs of life.* The literal translation of the same sentence is this: *For from it **come out** the sources of life.* All things of life stem from your heart. Imagine this: a city may look clean, but if the spring upstream is polluted, everyone downstream suffers. The heart is that spring. The city is your life.

Let me elaborate a little more on 'life' here. The life in the Scripture means more than just daily survival. Instead, it is the 'abundant' life Jesus promised. It is the life 'meaningful.' It is the life 'fulfilling.' It's the life of 'contentment.' It's the life God intends us to enjoy. In fact, Jesus wants us to have that life—and have it abundantly (John 10:10). This life consists of “*earthly felicity combined with spiritual blessedness*” (*The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Cesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, p. 313).

To 'life' here, the Septuagint (LXX) Bible renders a unique Greek word 'zoe' instead of 'bios.' Bios refers to the life just breathing, and 'zoe' refers to the life truly living. In other words, things that matter most in life originate from our heart. The essential elements of the blessed life, both physical and spiritual, come out of our heart. And, whatever comes out of our heart even determines our final destination. That's how crucial our heart is in life. So, if you want to live a life satisfactory and meaningful, and if you want to live a life with purpose and destination, and if you want to secure your life eternal, then learn to take good care of your heart.

Once again, understand your identity: You are the watchman. A watchman doesn't sleep on duty. Lives depend on his alertness. So does your 'zoe' life on your alertness. Your job is to keep your heart pure, innocent, and blameless in the sight of God until Christ comes (Philippians 1:10).

So, based on these understandings, I am going to introduce three ways to take good care of your heart. Let me say it again. The entire well-being of your heart and the quality of your life are determined by your *desire*, *discipline*, and *diligence*.

Three things we can do for our hearts: Screen out, Store up, and Stay on.

Screen out. You are on guard duty for life on behalf of your heart. Your duty is to prevent the enemy infiltration. E.g., The army uses the daily password. Whoever says the correct password may pass; whoever doesn't, the guard can shoot. Same goes with our guard duty for the heart. For any thought trying to enter the heart, ask the password which is always the same: **are you in line with God's will?** If so, enter. If not, stop. Never allow anything bad to enter your heart: only good things. E.g., Consider Airport Security. Not everything dangerous looks dangerous. That's why screening exists.

God commands us to take that screening on every thought entering our hearts. Listen: "... we are taking every thought **captive** to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5, NASB 1995). We must learn to screen out thoughts and feelings especially those that are negative and destructive. Some of us are in the habit of following whatever our heart says. *Follow your heart*, they say. However, beware: the same heart can deceive us. In Jeremiah 17:9, God says, "The heart is deceitful above all things..."

I would rather let God's Word guide me, not my own feelings. E.g., 1. "I cannot forgive my brother." — Remember the Lord's Prayer. E.g., 2. A young couple wants a divorce due to no more feelings of love to each other. —Marriage is a commitment. Let no one separate what God has joined, Christ says (Matthew 19:6). E.g., 3. Depressive / Suicidal thoughts. Check out the source. Satan can prompt such a thought in your heart (John 13:2). Give no opportunity to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). Bring every thought and feeling under the control of Christ. Filter it. Test it against God's Word. E.g., Practice the screening on TV and movies you watch. Pray before you watch. Place guards on your eye-gate and ear-gate. Stay disciplined on it. Payoff will be huge.

Think of it this way. Think of your mind like the air conditioning system in your house. The 'Screening' is the **air filter**. If that filter is missing or clogged, dust, allergens, and pollutants circulate through every single room in your home. Some thoughts are like 'spiritual dust'—cynicism, comparison, greed, or lust. If you don't have a high-quality 'Bible filter' at the intake of your heart, you will eventually breathe in the toxicity of the world until your soul feels heavy and sick. Screen out the dust so your soul can breathe.

Store up. There are many good things we can store up in our hearts; good memories, good music, good stories, good images, good thoughts, and so forth. But, first and foremost, begin with God's Word the Good Book. Why? Because it is the Word of life (1 John 1:1). God's Word gives you life and peace. It restores your health (Proverbs 4:22). It is essential for your eternal life, too. Do you love God? Then, you will love and cherish His Word.

It would be an oxymoron if you say, “I love God, yet I never open the Bible.” It would be equally contradictory if you say, “I care for my soul, yet I never read the Bible.” Why? Because God’s Word is the food for your soul, and if you don’t feed your soul with God’s Word, your soul will starve to death. Never believe in the devil’s lie that the Bible is too difficult to understand. He does everything to keep you from getting into God’s Word for your salvation.

Remember: God uses His words stored up in your heart to strengthen you. You need God’s Word for your eternal life. God’s Word protects your heart (Matthew 15:19). Listen to the Psalmist: ⁹ *How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. “Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You (Psalm 119:9, 11, NASB 1995).*

Why do we treasure it? Because we are building a reservoir. In times of drought, a city survives because of what it **stored up** during the rainy season. 'Storing up' the Word isn't just for today's happiness; it's for tomorrow's crisis. When a sudden 'drought' of grief or a job loss hits your life, you can't suddenly grow a deep root system. You must have the **reservoir** of God’s promises already full so that when you turn the tap of your heart, the 'Living Water' of Scripture comes out instead of the dry sand of despair. Remember what Jesus said: “*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes out of the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4).

Stay on good and godly thoughts. Storing is what you put in. Staying is what you keep returning to. Listen to Paul the Apostle: ⁸ *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything, worthy of praise, **dwel on** these things (Philippians 4:8, NASB 1995).* Whatever comes into our hearts, it stays in our hearts, and it is extremely hard to remove it. That’s why we need to make every effort to put godly things in our hearts in the first place as a daily positive reinforcement. Then, we keep on dwelling on such things all the time. Chew on them, sit on them, and meditate on them daily. You will have a blessed life.

This 'dwelling' is like a movie you choose to watch. If 'Storing up' is putting the film in the projector, 'Staying on' is hitting the '**Play**' button. We all have a mental projector that plays 'movies' in our heads all day. Often, we play 'horror movies' of 'What if?' or 'drama movies' of past offenses. Paul is telling us to change the reel. If you 'Stay on' a movie of God’s faithfulness, your mood will follow the movie. You cannot watch a movie of God’s victory and feel a sense of total defeat at the same time. Keep the right movie playing, because what you replay in your mind shapes your mood and direction.

Conclusion

Say after me: I am a watchman. I will watch over my heart with all diligence. I will Screen out, Store up, and Stay on God's Word. Amen.