

Guarding Your Thoughts

Proverbs 4:20-27

August 23, 2015

Introduction

One of the great things about God's Word is that it is very practical. It tells us what we should believe, and then it tells us how we should live according to what we should believe. People often complain that the Bible does not contain practical teaching. They are not look at all! The Bible is filled with countless examples of how we should live. Many times, it is revealed in how the people lived. We study their actions and consequences and learn what we should do by imitating their faith or avoiding their sins.

Solomon is now giving us the how to lesson of living in wisdom. He urges his son to embrace wisdom and to avoid sin. He gives his son how to do that. He tells his son the most important lesson that we all must learn, how to control and guard our thoughts. The reason that we must learn is that it affects every area of our life—in our worship, our relationships, and our private moments. Solomon is doing this so his son can do his duty which is to glorify God.

I. Guard Your Heart (23)

- Heart
 - Thought life = your thoughts and imaginations
 - Hebrews did not see the heart and mind as separate as we do today
 - Solomon compares it to a reservoir (lake)
 - The idea is that if the reservoir is good, then life around it will flourish (Sea of Galilee)
 - If the reservoir is poisoned, then life around it will die off (Dead Sea)
 - What comes out of your heart defines the quality of your character
 - If heart is pure, then good stuff will come out
 - If heart is defiled (poisoned), then evil stuff will come out
 - Your speech, behavior, and attitudes are affected
 - How do I know if my heart is defiled or pure?

Proverbs 23:7 *For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.*

- We know by examining our private thoughts
- If we think of bad things continually, then our hearts are defiled and it will come out

Mark 7:20-23 *He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' 21 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.' "*

Matthew 7:18 *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*

- If we think of pure things, then our hearts are pure and it will come out...notably peace!

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- Guarding it
 - Solomon tells us that we must guard our heart
 - It is our duty
 - Guarding our thoughts against corruption glorifies God
 - What we are guarding is internal not just external

Colossians 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- Paul lists sins that are internal (our thought life)
- Our sinful thoughts are the source of every kinds of problem we have

II. Difficulty of Guarding Your Thoughts

- With all diligence

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV) Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

- Implies hard work—all diligence
- It requires constant attention and concentration
- It is a struggle (a vast understatement!) that we must endure

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

Genesis 8:21 The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in His heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done."

Ecclesiastes 9:3 The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live.

- Remember it is not just outside influences that we must guard against, but we must protect ourselves from our own heart too!

Proverbs 28:26a He who trusts in his own heart is a fool

- We cannot trust ourselves to be pure
- We cannot fix ourselves

Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!

- This is a very hard task!
 - Adam was pure for a very short time
- How can we keep our thoughts pure?

Psalms 51:17 *The sacrifices of God are [3] a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

- By being humble and broken before God
- Do this at all times
- You devote yourself to God at all times

Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- No half-way attempts

Isaiah 66:2-4 *Has not My hand made all these things, and so they came into being?" declares the LORD. "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word. 3 But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol. They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; 4 so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened. They did evil in My sight and chose what displeases Me."*

- If we do so, then God hates it = hypocrisy
- We must kill sin before it starts in our heart

Romans 8:13 *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

III. Lessons of Guarding Your Thoughts (20-27)

- Much concentration (20-21)
 - Pay attention
 - Listen closely
 - Not out of sight
 - This is request 24/7—this is our duty
 - This concentration is like welding
- Different parts of body that we must keep an eye on
 - Ears (20b)
 - Be careful what you fill your ears with
 - Your ears should be focused on the wisdom of the word of God constantly
 - Eyes (21a, 25)
 - Keep your eyes where they ought to be
 - Keep your eyes from watching or looking at evil
 - Our society is bombarding us with ugly sinful images
 - Why?
 - Because it fulfills the lust of our eyes

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

- Keep your eyes away from time-wasters
 - We spend hours in front of our TV, computer, or phones
 - We spend hours reading books that do not have redeeming values

Psalms 119:37 Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to Your word.

○ Mouth (24)

- Think before you say anything
- Includes gossip, negative things, dirty talks or jokes
- Our mouths gets us into trouble more than anything

James 3:6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

- We must watch what we say because our mouth is linked to our thoughts and it is linked to hell
- If we control our tongue then we definitely can control our thoughts

James 3:2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.

○ Conscience (21)

- When we allow God's words to fill our thoughts, then we are governed by it
- His words will warn us to do right
- Our conscience is a warning system
- Failure to watch our conscience leads to our hearts being hardened

○ Feet (26-27)

- Watch where you are going!
- Stay away from places where temptation is too strong

Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

- If you are going to such places and you pray to God = it will not work
- We are fulfilling His commandments

Mark 12:30-31 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' **31** The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.

Coram Deo

God expects us to live holy because He is holy. Our holy living starts with our thoughts. We must concentrate everyday and ensure that we are guarding it and using it for His glory. When we do, we will be healthy and have life (22) which is a blessing from God. Guard your thoughts!