

# Guard Your Heart

by Keith Malcomson

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**Scripture:** Proverbs 4:23, Ephesians 3:17, 1 Peter 1:5, Philippians 4:7, Acts 20:28, Matthew 26:41, Psalm 119:11, Colossians 3:15, Philippians 4:6

**Topics:** "Guarding Your Heart", "Spiritual Diligence"

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## Description

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## Transcript

I want you to turn in your Bibles here this morning to Proverbs chapter 4, a well-known scripture I want to deal with this morning, and this is the scripture I had in my heart from the very beginning of this series. I think we've spent 12 or 13 weeks on this, and this is our final message on this series concerning a heart for God, either a heart for God or the heart of God within a believer. I believe this has been very important to deal with what is the heart that the Spirit of God searches for and looks for, and we've gone into this in detail, but this was the singular verse on my heart from the very beginning.

But do you know what? It would not. I preached from Proverbs chapter 4, 23 before, various times over the years, but not quite like this, because what I've done is lay out the foundation of what this heart looks like that you're to guard, and that's my message on this last message of this series. Guard your heart.

It's a final exhortation, though we always deal with the heart. This is a final message concerning guarding your heart, but now you understand what you are guarding and why God says to guard. This is the very, very reason, and I was going to read one verse, then I was going to read several verses, but you know what? Proverbs 4 is so vital, and listen for a second.

My text is verse 23, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. I'm going to preach on that verse, but let's listen for a second. Keep your mind connected here.

I want to read this entire proverb, but it's that verse I'm going for, and as we do, I believe after these weeks, you're going to understand why we have to guard the heart and what it is we're guarding and how sensitive it is. We've already looked at a heart that God is searching for, a broken and a contrite heart, a humble heart, a God-fearing heart, a heart to know God, a faithful heart, a love-dominated heart, and also a heart to seek God. Then last week, we dealt with a perfect heart.

If you know anything about your own heart and the human heart, you'll realize how sensitive all this is. To have a humble heart or a proud heart is only one step in either direction. You could be proud, an arrogant person, and you step into humility of heart and brokenness, or you could have walked in humility and you could step into pride, one step.

That's how delicate this heart is. Let's read together Proverbs 4, reading from verse 1. And listen so carefully, let the Spirit of God minister, hear ye children the instruction of a father and attend to no understanding. For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law, for I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

He taught me also and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words, keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get understanding, forget it not, neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not and she shall preserve thee.

Love her and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting, get understanding. Exult her and she shall promote thee.

She shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine heart an ornament of grace, a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and we could say daughter, and receive my sayings and the years of thy life shall be many.

I have taught thee in the way of wisdom, I have led thee in the right path. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straightened and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life.

Enter not into the path of the wicked and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass by it, turn from it and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall.

For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence, but the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness, they know not of what they stumble. My son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes, keep them in the midst of thine heart, for they are life unto those that find them and health to all their flesh.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee the forward mouth and perverse lips, put forth from thee. Let thine eyes look right on and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

Ponder the path of thy feet and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left, remove thy foot from evil. Let's pray together.

Father, we humble ourselves here this morning and Lord God, we do want to incline our ear. We want to hide your word within our heart that we might not sin against you. Lord God, I pray show us right now the importance of your word, of listening to it, of obeying it, of inclining our ear, of watching over it, of hiding it within these hearts of ours.

My God, we want our eyes, our vision to be right. We want the hearing of the ear to be right. We want our steps to be right.

We want our actions of our hands to be right. My God, and it all flows out of these hearts. Lord God, teach us, exhort us.

My God, seal our hearts this morning that we might keep our hearts and guard them and preserve them in this evil and wicked hour for your glory and your praise and your honor that we might love you with all of our heart, that we might humble ourselves under your mighty hand, that we might fear you always, that we might love you with all of our might. Lord God, that we might have faith in your words and in your character in Jesus' mighty name, amen, amen. Our text is verse 23, keep thy heart.

It's a command and that's the title of our message. Guard your heart. Do you realize how sensitive each of our hearts are? We've already dealt with over these several weeks certain individuals, some they started well, they ran well, but they finished bad.

They fell flat in their face. They let their heart go. They did not finish well.

An issue got into their heart. Something arose in their heart. They ran for many years, humble servants, and yet pride came in at the end.

Saints, you don't want to finish bad in this hour. This is a late hour. This is a dark hour.

This is an urgent hour. This is an hour of a short time where we're going to play out the last chapter of church history. You and I are a part of that.

We have been chosen to be here in this hour and it's no accident. Saints, you better run well. I hope that you're ready for this last race concerning our Christian life.

But I want to finish here with this exhortation. I want to exhort you, encourage you. I want to pull it all together now.

So that suddenly you realize why the scripture says, keep thy heart with all diligence. So that you'll suddenly realize you've got to guard it. You've got to protect it.

Saints, you may have done bad along the way. You may have messed up. You may have fell flat in your face.

You may have struggled with the issue of pride or unforgiveness or lust or something else. But you know what? In one moments of time, you can run well, live well, walk well, and be well. Guard your heart.

A wrong heart produces a wrong life. The heart is the most vital part of the entire person. What your heart is, is who you are.

The heart is the entire inner life. It is the control center of the person. And if you parallel your spiritual heart with your physical heart, without the heart pumping, functioning correctly, you're in trouble.

You won't walk. You won't speak. You won't think.

You won't act. That heart is pumping blood in around your entire being. Everything you do in life, everything you express, everything you think, everything you plan, everything you endeavor, all of it comes out of the bumping, beating, functioning of that heart.

As in the natural, so in the spiritual. Because what that heart is in your physical body to your brain, to your hand, to your feet, to your eye, to your ear, to your entire being, your entire blood system, every bit of your body, it all stems from the heart. What your heart is, is what you are.

It is what happens in your entire being. There's nothing in your spiritual life not connected to the spiritual condition of your heart. The spiritual condition of your heart is affecting your eyes and your ears and how you walk and how you act and your attitude.

It's your heart that dominates all these things. You could play the hypocrite, but it's shallow, absolutely shallow. What your heart is, it determines everything.

We've been taught about the whole inner life. Everything that comes into your life gets dumped in your heart. Everything you watch, listen to.

Everyone you listen to, all the ideologies, teachings, influences, you know where it gets dumped? In your heart. If you're an open sewer letting everything in, it all goes in your heart. You cannot listen to things and be neutral.

You can't. Everything gets into your heart. But also, everything that flows out of your life, through your mouth, through your actions, it all comes out of your heart.

And so we see the connection here. It says in Psalm 119 and verse 11, Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. I cannot emphasize strongly enough here, the importance of God's word to the condition of your heart.

It has to be more than words on a page or a sermon preached. You've actually got to take God's word and hide it in your heart. You've got to do that.

The consequences of you not doing that, of being lazy, neglectful, disobedient, casual. If you don't hide God's word within your heart, if you don't know how to do that, if you don't do that, if you're merely a hearer of the word, a listener, you could sit in church and enjoy God's word. We had someone this week come in and enjoy God's word.

And yet by the end of it, they're utterly indifferent. He enjoyed every word, every sentence. He enjoyed the whole experience of church.

But really at the end of it, he's been the person we've known for years, utterly unaffected or impacted. That's scary. That is scary that we could be an environment of God's word.

And yet it doesn't penetrate the heart. The psalmist in Psalm 119 knows the secret is hide God's word. You've got to do that.

I've got to get God's word in my heart. Not surface level, not ear level, not eye level. It's got to be right in there in the heart.

I've got to hide it in there. I've got to put it in my heart. Look at Proverbs 4 where we get this command to keep or to guard the heart.

The entire proverb is written by Solomon. And he actually reflects and he thinks back to a conversation of his father, King David, with him as a son. And now Solomon is speaking to those who read this proverb and he's communicating that again.

But really there's something far more behind all of this. It's not Solomon. It's not David.

It is God the father. It is the spirit of God saying incline your ear. Listen to your father in heaven.

And so look at this proverb for a second. Verse one, hear ye children the instruction of a father and attend to no understanding. Do you want to guard your heart? Do you want to protect your heart, protect humility and protect purity and protect the fear of God? Some people are used to fear God.

They don't even know how to anymore. There's some people who used to pray fervently. They don't even know how to go aside and pray anymore.

You see something can happen. You didn't guard your heart. It's such an essential thing.

And so he says here, hear you children. Listen to someone who's gone before you. Listen to someone who's had to fight the demons.

Listen to someone who's had to walk through the fire. Listen to someone who's neglected and been burnt. Hear you children the instruction of a father and attend to no understanding.

For I give you good doctrine. Doctrine is a dirty word in this generation. Doctrine, teaching.

Theology. And I don't like the word theology. But as one old Puritan said, he defined the term theology.

Theology is the teaching that makes you walk with God. I believe in theology. Not what theologians make of theology.

I believe in that doctrine, that teaching that makes you walk with God. That is theology. And you know here, he's saying concern him.

I give you good doctrine. Forsake ye not my law. It says in verse four, he taught me also and said unto me, let thine heart retain my words.

Notice your heart is meant to retain the word of God. Keep my commandments and live. It's that heart that is to listen, be inclined.

It's meant to take on board. It's meant to receive instruction, the commands of God. And that heart is to keep it.

Do you want to guard your heart against hell? Do you realize the hour that we're in? That literally our entire world is changing radically. And we've watched this step-by-step. We warned before it happened.

We warned during it. And we continue to warn as a church. Do you know the political, economic, business system and religious system of our world is literally before our eyes, turning the entire atmosphere of our world, all of society into a great pressure cooker.

And none of us are unaffected by it. They're using media and school and education and national politics. And they're creating one massive, wicked, evil, immoral pressure cooker.

And you know what a pressure cooker does? And I'm not an expert, ladies. You can tell me. But a pressure cooker creates an atmosphere.

Whatever is within it, a whole new different atmosphere that isn't outside it. And it creates this pressure that cooks the food and steams the food and nurtures the food and begins to change everything within it, the very nature of it. And so they are creating a massive, worldwide, global pressure cooker.

And you know what? You are right in the midst of that. I'm warning you, you better guard your heart. And there's only one way to do that.

It is the word of God. Verse 10, Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings. Receive them into your heart, and the years of thy life shall be many.

Verse 13, Take fast hold of instruction. Let her not go. Keep her, for she is thy life.

All of these instructions concerning building up to God in your heart. One verse, but you've got all of this teaching. Please listen to me.

Please take on the word of God. You dare not be a hearer only. You dare not be someone that merely enjoys the word of God.

I'm like listening to a violin or beautiful music. You sit there and you enjoy it, and you go away and forget it. So much preaching is dealt with like that.

And I want to tell you, if the spirit of God has been here warning us, preparing us, and put this church here, woe on to you if you take the word of God lightly in this hour. I've got three things I want to deal with in this verse. Concerning keeping the heart.

Secondly, to do it with all diligence. Thirdly, concerning the issues of life coming out of it. And I want to take it back to front.

I actually want to deal with the latter half of this verse first. What does it say? For out of it are the issues of life. Before I even exhort you to guard your heart and teach you what it says here on guarding your heart or keeping your heart, before I even do that, I want to give you the last half of this verse.

Because you know what it's doing? It's giving you the reason why you must guard. You know, most of the time we don't do things because we don't understand why. I believe in giving explanations about the word of God.

I believe that's why there's so much teaching in the Bible. God doesn't just command you to do something. He shows you examples in the Bible of someone who didn't do it and examples in the Bible of someone who did do it.

And then he gives you all of this information. And if you're still dumb and ignorant and callous after that, what more do you want him to do? And so let me start with the issues of life. This is the reason why you're to guard your heart.

He actually gives you the fundamental reason. Why do you need to guard the heart? Why is it so essential? Why is it so vital? Why is it so important? After we've taught all these weeks on all these beautiful characteristics, why is it at the end of it all you've got to guard your heart? You have to protect your own heart. No one can essentially do that for you.

I can help you and encourage you and be there to pray for you, but you have to guard your heart. Why is it? Look what he says, for out of it, out of your heart, notice it's out of your heart, out of it are the issues of life. It was Charles Spurgeon actually said concerning this verse.

He called it the great reservoir. The heart is the great reservoir. You know what a reservoir is? If you have a water reservoir, that's where all of your drinking water is going to come from.

And if you're not tapped into that, every bit of water you drink comes from the reservoir. All of Limerick is drinking water from some reservoir. Where I lived up north, we had the reservoir up in the midst of the Mourne Mountains and all of our drinking water came out of those mountains.

It was beautiful and it was safe and it was healthy flowing down from those mountains. That was the reservoir. Do you realize the heart is the reservoir of everything that flows out of your life? There's nothing comes out of any aspect of your life.

No aspect. You're thinking that generates action or words or plans or agendas. All of that comes out of your heart.

And so why do we guard the heart? It's because out of that heart come the issues of life. In other words, the heart is the source, the origin or the fountain. Everything flows out of the heart.

It's your heart that identifies you. You know, all of you are not identified merely by your face and your color and your hair and your style and your clothes. You know, all of you are identified by something far deeper and fundamental than that.

It's your personality, your character, your inward man. That's what identifies you. I think of each one of you as a personality.

And you know what I'm really identifying is your heart. Because who you are and who you exude as yourself, really you're showing me what your heart is. Many are willing to deal with the outward.

They'll discipline themselves. They'll rebuke themselves. They'll talk to somebody else and say, you shouldn't do that.

We deal with the outward. God deals with the heart. And believe me, you could spend a lifetime trying to purse your lip or trying to just sit there and say nothing or not to react or not to get angry or not to get frustrated.

You could spend a lifetime trying to deal with that. You know where the real issue is? It's your heart. It's not your environment.

You say, if only I could be in a different workplace. If only I had a different family. If only I lived on a different house in the state.

If only I had a different neighbor. Man, if I did not have that neighbor above me, under me, beside me, you don't know what sort of Christian I'd be. I'd be a dynamic on fire.

Really? Really? I want to tell you, it's not your environment. You say, oh, if only I was taught better. You know, I met Christians not taught well in the scriptures.

They haven't sat under good teaching, yet their heart is right. You could say, if only I knew a bit more. Or, well, I'm only saved 10 years.

How long do you want? Or you say, if I just have a certain experience, I'm in a baptism of fire or something I've read about in a testimony or maybe Acts 2, then my heart. You need to be very, very careful. Out of it, your heart flow the issues of life.

It is coming out of your heart. The heart is the fountain. It is who you are.

You want to know why the Bible exhorts you to guard your heart and to fight for your heart and to watch over your heart? You want to know why this exhortation is here? Because what you let into your heart is who you are. You need to realize there are many things flowing towards your heart. Every day, morning to night, morning to night.

Every day, every week, every month, every year. You've got things flowing in. If you don't guard that heart, you know what? You're an open sewer.

All of this stuff is flowing in. People come and talk to you and tell a dirty joke or give an ideology about children, how you educate them or tell you what you ought to be as a Christian. You can drink, don't worry.

You'll be all right. A little drink, a little glass of wine won't affect you. You've just received something.

All of this is coming daily. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12, 35. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.

Notice here that Jesus says concerning a good man, he's got good treasure in his heart. What is treasure? Treasure is what you store up. That's what treasure is.

So your heart is your heart is your heart. And he goes on to talk about a bad heart, a bad man. So if you have a good heart, you're a good man.

You have a bad heart, you're a bad man. Both of them have treasures. What are the treasures? The things you've stored up.

You said, I'll keep that. I'll keep that. I'll allow that in.

That's important to me. I'll spend time on that. I agree with that.

You know what you're doing? You're storing up treasure in your heart. I believe in these messages on the heart. There have been those online and here.

And you know what you're doing? You're storing up, you're storing up. You're actually saying, I want a humble heart and I want a pure heart and I want a perfect heart. And I want a God-fearing heart and a loving heart and a faith-filled heart.

I want a heart that trembles at the word of God. And all across the church, you've got these people that say, oh no, no, God doesn't want you to fear. How ignorant.

And there's those that say, we should never tremble before God. Then take your Bible and throw it in the bin. These are people who do not incline their ear.

They do not hide God's word within their heart. Jesus is actually saying here, the word treasure, and this is it in the Greek. Listen carefully.

It means a deposit or what has been placed there very specifically. What has been allowed to remain there. You see your treasure is what your heart is filled with.

Good, bad, or ugly. What you find in your heart is what you've treasured up. Maybe it was through ignorance or lack of teaching.

Maybe it was through carelessness or laziness. But do you know what? If you look in your heart and you find, oh God, a grown sin. Oh God, I want to walk humbly before you.

Do you know you've treasured something up in that heart? Because either it's saying, oh God, that I might walk lowly. I hate high thoughts towards my brothers and sisters or else it's a proud, arrogant, huh, look at him. Huh, look at her.

Huh, I can do better than that. You've got one. And do you know what? Whatever you find in your heart, you stored it up there.

You allowed it to come in. You tolerated it, good or bad. I can remember once, I've told this so many times, but do you know what? It hit me so hard.

It impacted me so mightily. At the Lord's table in a church we were in and someone got up at the Lord's table to share. And this proud, arrogant, stinking thought arose.

I never would have imagined it could be there. And I wasn't aware of letting it in or preparing ground for it. But suddenly this stinking, rotten attitude rose up against that young man.

It was an attitude of arrogance. No one else heard it. It was for a split second.

And you know what? I was revolted at myself. I sat there and I said, oh God, I don't want this in my heart. Oh God, don't let this be here.

It was only there for a second. It had never risen up like that before. I didn't prepare the way, but as soon as it come, you know what? I said, I don't want to treasure it in this heart.

Oh, such a small... Sure, it's nothing brother. Don't worry. Sure, we're all like that.

You need to be very careful what you allow in that heart. And so Jesus talks here. A good man out of a good heart, treasurer of stuff, good things.

And he bringeth forth. What are you bringing out of your life? It's what you stored up in your heart. What you tolerated, what you allow, what you nurture, what you guard, what you protect.

You know, people can have an idol in their heart that they are guarding in their heart. The word of God says, cast it out. And you comfort it.

You know what you do with your pet sin? You're besetting sin. That one sin that keeps coming back or that idol. On a cold winter's night, you push the seat up beside the warm fire and say, come warm yourself.

Don't want to put you out in the cold. No one would survive out there on a night like this. Why don't you come? Let's spend some time together.

Do you see the danger with this? All of us are storing up treasures within our heart, good or bad. These deposits will either be good or evil and will influence the whole direction of your life. And in fact, you can only bring out what you've stored up there.

What you are inwardly is what you're going to bring out to give to others. Your words, your actions, your opinions, your advice, your counsel, your prayers. All of it, you're drawn out of your own heart.

You better make sure it's good what you put in there. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 7, 21 to 23. For from within, within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts.

Where do they come from? The heart of men. You want to know the source of evil thoughts. It's your heart.

Adulteries. Where does adultery begin? It begins in the heart. Hidden, secret.

It's not the heart would act, oh, I fell into it. No, you didn't. Oh, I tripped up.

No, you didn't. It comes out of the heart. Adulteries, not singular, plural.

Fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, deceitful person. You know what? Your heart's deceitful. Deceitful, always putting up an image.

Lasciviousness, no restraint. An evil eye. You've got a rotten heart.

Blasphemy. The Irish are terrible blasphemers. The worst in the world.

British soldiers are not as bad as old grannies in Ireland. They are blasphemers. Pride, foolishness.

Nothing wrong with a bit of foolishness, really. All these, listen to what Jesus said. All these evil things come from within and defile the man because it marks who you are.

See, if that's in your heart, you become that. That's who you are. That is what you are.

So that's my first point. The reason we have to guard the heart, it's because for out of it are the issues of life. Everything is pouring out of it.

You've got to guard what goes in it. You've also got to guard what gets tolerated in it. And then you've got to guard what comes out of it.

That's the reason you guard the heart because whatever is in that heart is going to mark who you are. You're either a proud person, or you could close it in humble words, oh brother, but a proud heart. You're either going to have a proud heart or a humble heart.

And that's not accidental. You don't say a little prayer and just say, Lord, make me all these things. Amen.

You've got a fight in your hands. You've got to fight to get there. You've got to fight to stay there.

And you've got to fight to continue to the end there. The second point here, keeping your heart. And so we see the reason.

But there's an exhortation by the Spirit of God, keep your heart. You see how the heart is the object and the focus of the guarding. You've got a great work, a great task.

Oh, I'm going to evangelize the city. Oh, I'm going to preach to the world. Oh, I'm going to heal every sick person.

Oh, I'm going to feed all the poor. Do you know your greatest task is to keep your heart? Because everything comes out of that. Do you know what? If you don't keep your heart, you could feed the poor.

And yet you're not doing it in love. You're doing the right thing. And you ought to feed the poor.

But do you know what? You actually do not have the right heart. You're wrong. I could preach truth in this pulpit.

My sermon could be utterly perfect. It could be theologically correct. It could have all the right statements.

It could be pure and holy. And yet my heart could be rotten standing here. We need to be so careful.

This means there are things you do not want in your heart. If you're to keep your heart, you've got to keep certain things out. This word for keep or to guard is used about 60 times in the Old Testament.

Sometimes it's used about looking after a tree, to guard a tree, to nurture it, to make sure it grows straight and it's protected. Sometimes it speaks of an entire vineyard. You know what? You're not going to grow a vineyard without much work.

A garden does not stay the same way. Candace has me out once a week mowing, cutting, trimming, throws me out there. I go, not the garden again.

Why doesn't it just stay okay? We had two visitors the past two days, family members, and they walked around and just enjoyed being outside. Isn't it beautiful? You don't know what it costs. Look at the smell and the roses and the paths.

Isn't it beautiful? Maybe Shiloh keeps the garden. No, she does not. It costs.

There's labor. And so this word guard or keep is actually used of a whole vineyard, watching over it and guarding it and protecting it. Do you know this guard or keep your heart? It is a command.

It's not an option. That shows the urgency in it. Keep your heart, guard your heart, protect your heart.

It's absolutely vital. You can't afford to fall asleep. It's a command to action, to implement means.

You're going to have to do something to guard that heart. Oh, I prayed this morning God would guard my heart. You better be on guard.

It's a call to action, to deeds, to making provision, to guard your heart. To guard means you do something. You're going to have to work.

Since I believe in the power of God, the sovereignty of God, the might of God, I can't do one thing. I can't even make the right choice without the power of God. Why do I make the right choices? Because God is willing in me.

Why do I do the right thing? Because God is willing in me to do. It's all from him. My entire Christian life, but never neglect our responsibility.

Our responsibility fits together with God's divine power and sovereignty. And so we're called to a occupation. It's your greatest task.

It's not your job that's your greatest task. It's not raising your children that's your greatest task. It's not making sure your husband functions correctly is your greatest task.

It's not something in this church of a guitar or a piano or the video at the back or to preach. God help us. That isn't the most vital thing in this church.

You know the most vital thing? Keep your heart. This preacher better keep his heart. This guitar player better keep his heart.

That cameraman better keep his heart. Every single one of us in this room, that is your greatest occupation. It's commanded.

It's a calling. It's a task. It's a duty.

You can't be a Christian and not feel the urgency. Haven't we all been burnt when we just coasted along? Ah, Sarah, Sarah, whatever will be will be. Sure leave it to the Lord.

Leave it to the preacher. As long as I'm in the right atmosphere. Do you know there are two people who lived in paradise once? The perfect environment.

The perfect provision. The perfect everything. And they said, ah, Sarah, Sarah, they didn't guard their own heart.

What a great danger. Just look at the things that are affected here. It's amazing.

Run this verse here concerning keeping your heart. Guarding your heart. The effect it has.

Look at verse 20. My son, attend to my words. Incline thine ear unto my sayings.

So concerning guarding your heart. Remember that's the primary issue here. To guard your heart.

He is saying you've got to have your ear working with your heart. You want to store up good things in your heart. You better guard that ear.

The ear is connected to the heart. You've got to incline your ear to the right thing, to the word of God. And so in verse 20, he's exhorted.

You want to guard your heart? How do you guard your heart? I mean, think about it. You're guarding your heart. Yes, guard your heart.

The word guard here means to put a military embattlement around it. Oh, well, I'll just stand here. So what are you guarding against? Not sure.

What are you looking out for? I'm not really sure. I'm just guarding my heart. How do you know it's being attacked? How do you practically know how to guard it? This is one of the primary ones.

Guard your ear. You want to guard your heart? You better incline your ear to God's word. You better force yourself.

God, you've got to help me to listen. Oh, God, I need to. You need to discipline yourself.

You know, when you get up in the morning, you go, I don't have time to read the word of God. I don't even have a desire to read the word of God. Warning, warning.

Do you realize how dangerous? That's why your heart isn't guarded. It's beginning with your ear. No, I'm not going.

I don't have time, Lord, to incline my ear. Then your heart is under attack. What about your eyes? Verse 21.

Let them not depart from thine eyes. Talking about God's word. Keep them in the midst of thine heart.

Notice here that keeping your eyes on God's word means they are going to be in the midst of your heart. Do you see the connection? You want to guard your heart? You've got to guard your eye. These eyes are going to bring things into your heart.

When your eyes are upon the word of God, meditating on the word of God, some people think these things don't matter. Oh, the Bible says, read the word of God and says, look at the word of God. But it doesn't mean literally look.

That doesn't have an effect, does it not? According to this verse, it says it very clearly. Keep them in the midst of thine heart. There's actually a connection.

Verse 25. Let thine eyes look right on. Let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

You see, this writer knows that to guard your heart, you've got to be very careful where your eyes are. You better look straight ahead of you. You know, guys, I taught myself.

No one told me this. No one instructed me. Not my mom, not my dad, not my pastor.

But somewhere, I don't know where I got it. Somewhere it came to me. And I had enough wisdom from the word of God.

When I was 16, I went into the army. After I backslide, got right with God, and I'd be in environment. Every army camp you go into, every room you go into, every locker you look at, has certain kinds of pictures on it.

Every single locker of every single soldier in the British army, or at least most. Let's say 99.9%. You walk into a room, and you're surrounded by this on the outside of the lockers. You walk in the garage, there is a certain row, certain shelf.

Do you know what I taught myself at 17 years old? I walk in the garage, I never look at that shelf. Never. I had to train myself.

It was a choice. It was a decision. It's not going to just happen.

I could say, oh, I can look anywhere. It doesn't affect me. Do you know you're getting bombarded with your eyes, and your ears, and with all of your senses, constantly, all of the time.

I trained myself. Do you know what I didn't realize? It was so much habitually a thing. Candace only told me, way in term marriage says, do you know I watched you when we got married? I didn't realize.

I just did not think. I wasn't doing a performance. She said she watched me, and where my eyes would go.

Well, sure, we all know where that shelf is. It's a little thing. And yet, I'm talking about the heart.

The actual heart. The eyes do affect the heart. Or what about the tongue? Boy, now we're getting to it.

Ladies, you could have said, well, preach it. Suck it to the guys. Okay, verse 24.

Put away from thee a forward mouth. You see how all of this is around guarding your heart? You want to guard your heart? Put away from thee a forward mouth, and perverse lips. Put far from thee.

You think you can have a perverse lips, comments, statements, and your heart's pure? No way. That tongue is revealing. Do you know what Jesus said? A man speaks out of the abundance of his heart.

That tongue reveals an awful lot about you. It says in Proverbs 16, 23. The heart of the wise teaches his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips.

Do you know your lips are a reflection of your heart? Angry words. I know what's in your heart. Lying words.

I know what's in your heart. Frustrated words. I know what's in your heart.

Your words reveal an awful lot about you. Psalm 37, 30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

Then listen to the next part. The law of his God is in his heart. None of his steps shall slide.

Hide God's word in your heart. I want to tell you, someone told me this week, they said, well sure, as a Christian, sure, of course you swear at least the odd time. You stamp my foot hard one of these days, and you see what comes out.

I'm just talking about there's been a protection. I'm not more pure. I'm not more holy.

I'm not more saintly. All it is, is that I endeavor to put God's word. I've never in my life tried to say this carefully, because a lot of work goes into these things.

I did not have to work hard on my tongue. I didn't. I worked hard on my heart and putting God's word in there.

That's where I got the victory. You want to know why I've got a controlled tongue? It's because of God's word going into the heart. That's the whole key.

If you have God's law in your heart, then you are going to speak God's wisdom. And what about your feet here? Verse 26, ponder the path of thy feet and let all thy ways be established. Ponder the path of thy feet.

Oh, well, I just walked through life. You better be more deliberate than that. Making up with someone.

You're just casually making up with a family member. Have you prayed into that? Have you considered it? What are they going to contribute in? What are they feeding into my heart? Or what am I feeding into them? That could be the last time you're with your mom or dad or brother or sister or child. What are you contributing? And so we're told here, you want to guard your heart, then ponder your path.

There's no point being in a situation that you've deliberately walked into. I mean, please, Lord, protect me from all temptation. I plead the blood.

You shouldn't have been there. You're in a pub sitting down. Everyone's drinking around you.

Oh, God, protect me. What are you doing there? You're in a house alone with a girl. Saying, Lord, help me.

Make me strong morally. What are you doing there? You need to do a Joseph. Tuck up your skirt and run for your life.

Remember what brother Clendon said? He said, Joseph was not running from that woman. He was running from himself. That's not a weak man.

Do you hear me? The weak man stays there and says, I can manage this. I'm okay. I won't get tempted.

Then you're a fool. I'm not brave because I stay where I shouldn't stay, in the place of temptation. I'm brave and courageous because I run.

Scary custard. You bet. Better men than you have fallen.

Better women than you have fallen. There's three things here I want to give you about really guarding your heart. Listen carefully.

And I'm going to use the word bastion. You know what a bastion is? Is a castle defense system. It's a bastion.

It's a stronghold. So I'm going to talk here about the bastion. Three things concern your heart.

First of all, the bastion of salvation. It says in Ephesians chapter 3, 17, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. This is the new birth.

The born again experience. You know where Christ dwells. He is physically at the right hand of the father.

But by faith, he dwells in my heart. My heart. We're talking about guarding the heart.

You know the greatest guard for your heart, the greatest protection is to know and to believe that Christ dwells in your heart by faith. By faith, I know he dwells in my heart. You know, people can mock about inviting Jesus into your heart.

I'm telling you, Jesus dwells in my heart. Right now, you believe that? Yes, Christ himself is dwelling in my heart. You know what? I have a confidence.

This is the new birth. The born again experience. When I repented of my sin and believed in Christ and accepted his forgiveness and his grace and his love, I didn't deserve it.

My heart was rotten. So was yours. Your heart was depraved.

And yet, do you know what Christ done? Christ moved into that heart once it was filled with the devil. Now Christ dwells there. This word dwells literally means living there.

He makes it his home, his habitation, his dwelling place. You've got to believe the saints of God. Christ may dwell there in your hearts by faith.

Do you believe this? Do you realize by standing with faith and saying, I believe the word? See, I've inclined my ear. I've received the word of God. I believe this.

I actually believe that my heart has been, it's a bastion of salvation. My heart is guarded by genuine salvation. Christ is here.

What a better help to be in holy and pure and forgiving and walking right and fearing God because Christ dwells in my heart. Not just mystically somewhere in my body. He is dwelling in my heart.

Then secondly, the bastion of God's power. It says in 1 Peter 1-5, speaking about the believer who are kept. The word kept there means guarded.

Same word, guarded. It's a military term. Who are kept by the power of God.

Through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed at the last time. Notice here the Christian is to be kept by the power of God. I'm a weak so-and-so.

I'm a weak, frail, feeble Christian. I'm pleading with God. I am in the presence of God late in the last night going, oh God, help me.

I am such a weak vessel, but I know who you are. I know your power. I know I'm kept by the power of God.

Do you realize we are kept? Do you realize what a keeping I have? My heart is kept by the power of God. The literal power, dynamic, almighty power. The power that created the universe.

The power that commanded a man to be created. The power that created the sun. Do you realize we're kept by the power of God? We're so feeble.

And then you go, by faith I'm kept. Do you believe the saints of God? When you're struggling and you're stammering and you're going, am I gonna make it through the trial and through this temptation? You know what? You cannot put trust in yourself. I'm strong.

Remember what Peter says? Master, I'd never deny you. See those 11? They would. I've watched them.

Master, I've had my eye on that little John. I've had my eye on Matthew and Ty. They would deny you.

I never would. I'd die for you. Really, Peter.

You know, your problem is your strength in yourself. Do you know what real salvation is? It is in... What is the new birth of born again experience? Remember what we're told? No confidence in ourself. Philippians.

I don't have any confidence. I can't. I'm like a broken reed.

I'll let myself down. And that's why I go... I look to him and by faith, he keeps me. He keeps me.

I am kept. So you're bastioned around. Your heart is kept by the power of God.

Can you think of a greater thing? Not an army, not multitudes, not tanks, not bombs, not airplanes. It is the power of God himself that you are kept straight through until that day when you see Jesus. Then thirdly, the bastion of God's peace.

It says in Philippians chapter four and seven. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, doesn't make any sense. So keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus.

What's going to keep your hearts? It's going to be the peace of God. Not only the power of God. Not only Christ dwelling in your heart, keeping you.

But the peace of God is going to keep you. It's going to keep you standing and walking. It's going to keep you pure in an evil world.

It is the peace of God. It is the shalom of God. It is the being right.

There's nothing to put right. I'm right with God. The peace of God.

To know that you're right with God. Nothing undealt with is a beautiful thing. And in Colossians three and 15.

Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. To the which also you're called in one body and be thankful. Isn't it amazing the little verses, bits of verses we miss.

And be thankful. The peace of God. Let it rule in your heart.

We're talking about keeping your heart. It is a work. You've got to take care.

The word to guard means to care for your heart. To keep things secret in your heart. To guard the heart from harm.

And to preserve it through all things. Lastly, the term here, the middle term. What does it say? With all diligence.

Keep your heart with diligence. Well, I do it Sunday mornings. I'll do it on Saturday night when temptation is at its height.

Well, I'm due a break, Brother Keith. So I can let all my guard down. I'm going on holiday for two weeks.

So I don't need to go to church. I don't need to read my Bible. I don't need to worry about prayer.

With all diligence. You know what the word means? Frequently, regularly, constantly. You need a monitor over your heart.

My heart will lie to me. Sure, you're okay. Ever heard it? Sure, you'll be fine.

Sure, you're strong. Sure, you've worked hard. Sure, you deserve.

You need to be constantly aware. Even in church. Even in church.

There's got to be a monitor. Remember the class monitor? When we were at school and they gave some boy, some girl a monitor's badge. And usually that, I hope Candice wasn't a monitor.

But either that boy or that girl. What you really knew is that teacher says, they'll do everything. Tell me everything.

I can trust them. They'll grasp the rest of you is up. Now, sorry if you're a monitor.

I know you'll have your corner on this. But let me just use it for an example. So the monitor is there to watch.

I wish I would have known what the word monitor meant back then. I just thought, well, they're more intelligent than the rest of us. No, a monitor is a watcher, a guard.

Someone who is always there. The teacher isn't always there, but the monitor is always there. Wouldn't it be wonderful? We don't need the preacher or the church or some brother or sister.

There's a monitor there. What are you monitoring? What are you watching? You're watching what comes in. You're watching what is there.

Since we can't, I'm glad for a mother that told me, thank God for godly mothers. I'm glad for a mother that taught me as a young boy, Keith. You can't stop the birds flying over your head.

Can't stop that. But you can stop them nesting in your hair. I've never once seen someone with a bird's nest in their hair.

Although it wouldn't surprise me in this generation. It was seen everything this generation. But you know what? You can't stop those birds flying over, but we can take prevent.

My mom taught me that. Thank God for godly proverbs. They make it sink in and say, do you know what? That's my responsibility.

Some things you can't prevent, but there's some things you can. It actually means above or beyond or all. That's what the word means.

You're to have a prison around your heart, a guard. You're to act as a guard. You're to monitor what goes into your heart.

You're to monitor what comes out of your heart. You're to monitor what is in your heart all of the time. You remember Judas.

See, I can let my guard down. I'm in church. I'm going to fellowship with you around some food here this afternoon.

What a safe place to be. One of the most dangerous places on the earth is here. Do you realize how dangerous it is to sit under a good preaching? To be with good brothers and sisters? To be in an atmosphere of prayer? To be in the house of God? Do you realize how dangerous? No, brother Keith, that is the safest place.

Oh, no. Remember what I said about Adam and Eve in paradise? In paradise, that's the very time you don't think you're going to get tempted. It's the very time you don't see the serpent.

It's the very time when the devil says, did God say in paradise when everything's perfect and you have all the benefits? That's the time you don't see the arrow. You see it out there in the pub. You can see it coming.

You see it out there in the high street or the workplace. You see it coming. What about Judas? He is sitting with the other apostles.

The beginning of the church with Christ. And right there, the devil fires an arrow of betrayal. Do you know he was planning to betray Christ? But he wouldn't have had the courage.

It took the devil to come in on that. And what did he do? He fired an arrow at his heart. And it says he threw it.

He threw betrayal at Judas. Judas is already planning it academically, naturally. We're going to hear about Wednesday.

Why? He betrayed. Got offended. This should have been sold and given to the poor.

Stop it. Judas got offended. And the devil come in on it and fired an arrow.

Where did he fire it? In his heart. He put betrayal. You don't want the devil to put betrayal in your heart.

You better be guarding. You better be diligent. This is in a spiritual atmosphere of a Christian offending you.

That preacher offended me. Jesus offended me. He embarrassed me in front of everyone.

That's because you're so wrong in what you're saying is so dangerous. And you know what? Something comes in that destroyed Judas. What about Ananias and Sapphira? You couldn't get a better couple than this.

You know what they're doing? They're selling their land to financially support revival in the church. And what do you want to come and speak to me about Ananias and Sapphira? I'm not listening a word. I wouldn't listen a word about this beautiful couple who are financing the church and the revival and they're

laying the money at our feet.

I think it's the devil using you speaking against them. Do you remember what it says in the book Acts? Remember when Peter rebukes him and says, did you sell the money for this? Yeah, yeah. Your land to the Holy Ghost.

And says, why have you allowed Satan to conceive this and in other words birth it in your heart? Do you know the devil can birth things within heart? This was a nice Christian couple in the church. Using their money not for drink, not for drugs, not for immorality. They're using their money for a Pentecostal revival in Jerusalem where thousands are being saved.

But you know what? It was wicked and evil and it got into their heart. That's why Jesus says in Matthew 26, 41, watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Will you stand with me here as we close? We have gone through this entire series. We have looked at this issue of the heart. We have gone step by step looking at what this heart is to be.

And saints of God, as we close here this morning, I'm exhorting you. Keep your heart. Watch over your heart.

What comes in? What is there? And what is going to come out of it? Because you could even be given money and yet what is coming out is deception and lies and stealing. Because there is an agenda there. There's a deception.

There's a lying to the Holy Ghost. So what is coming out of you? A man may not see through it, but God, the Holy Ghost looks at it and said, it's unexpected. Let's pray here together.

Let's lift our hands, open our hearts. Father, we pray right now in the mighty name of Jesus. Lord God, we pray for the power of God and the peace of God and the indwelling of Christ in our hearts.

We believe that there's a garrison, a protection of these hearts. All the power of God is available. All the peace of God is available.

All the indwelling of the person of Christ. And Lord God, we lay hold of you in the light of all these messages, all this ministry, all that you've dealt with us over the past three months. My God, we call upon you, recognizing our weakness and our inability and our powerlessness.

But oh God, our faith is in you. We put our faith in you. We are kept by the power of God through faith in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My God, make us watchful because our flesh, our natural man is very weak. Lord God, we pray, oh God, the spiritual man within us is willing. Our spirit within us desires to be humble and God-fearing and faithful and loving.

But oh God, our flesh is so weak. Will you help us here this morning that Christ might be glorified and magnified in our lives in Jesus' name. As we close this series, saints of God, in this last message, you can kneel where you are.

You can come and kneel in this altar, you and the Lord. Just for a moment, saints of God, make a response to him. Make this your heart plea.

I tell you, in the middle of the night last night, I was kneeling by my bed, walking up and down in my room, fighting out this issue, pleading with God for my own heart, for our house, for our family. Saints of God, you've got to wrestle and watch over this heart in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's come and seek him for a moment.

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