

Keep Your Heart

Proverbs 4:20-27

- I. The _____ of keeping our hearts.
 - A. _____ your _____ (20)
 - B. _____ your _____ (21, 25)
 - C. _____ your _____ (24)
 - D. _____ your _____ (26-27)

- II. The _____ in keeping our hearts.
 - A. In times of personal _____ don't
_____ God.
 - B. In times of trial and _____ don't
_____ God.
 - C. In times of surprise _____ don't
_____ God.
 - D. In times of spiritual _____ don't
_____ God.

If the keeping of the heart be so important a business; if such great advantages result from it; if so many valuable interests be wrapped up in it, then let me call upon the people of God everywhere to engage heartily in this work. O study your hearts, watch your hearts, keep your hearts! Away with fruitless controversies and all idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with unprofitable discourse and bold censures of others, and turn in upon yourselves. O that this day, this hour, you would resolve upon doing so!

All that I beg for is this, that you would step aside oftener to talk with God and your own heart; that you would not suffer every trifle to divert you; that you would keep a more true and faithful account of your thoughts and affections; that you would seriously demand of your own heart at least every evening, 'O my heart, where hast thou been to-day, and what has engaged thy thoughts?'

And now are you inclined to undertake the business of keeping your heart? Are you resolved upon it? I charge you, then, to engage in it earnestly. Away with every cowardly feeling, and make up your mind to encounter difficulties. Draw your armor from the word of God. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in its commands, its promises, its threatenings; let it be fixed in your understanding, your memory, your conscience, your affections. You must learn to wield the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God) familiarly, if you would defend your heart and conquer your enemies. You must call yourself frequently to an account;

examine yourself as in the presence of the all seeing God; bring your conscience, as it were, to the bar of judgment. Beware how you plunge yourself into a multiplicity of worldly business; how you practice upon the maxims of the world; and how you venture at all to indulge your depraved propensities. You must exercise the utmost vigilance to discover and check the first symptoms of departure from God, the least decline of spirituality, or the least indisposition to meditation by yourself, and holy conversation and fellowship with others. These things you must undertake, in the strength of Christ, with invincible resolution in the outset. And if you thus engage in this great work, be assured you shall not spend your strength for naught; comforts which you never felt or thought of will flow in upon you from every side. The diligent prosecution of this work will constantly afford you the most powerful excitements to vigilance and ardor (enthusiasm or passion), in the life of faith, while it increases our strength and wears out your enemies. And when you have kept your heart with all diligence a little while, when you have fought the battles of this spiritual warfare, gained the ascendancy over the corruptions within, and vanquished the enemies without, then God will open the gate of heaven to you, and give you the portion which is promised to them that overcome. Awake then, this moment; get the world under your feet, pant not for the things which a man may have, and eternally lose his soul; but bless God that you may have his service here, and the glory hereafter which he appoints to his chosen.

- Puritan Pastor John Favel