

Audio file

[Peter Logie 8326pl_prov_4_v23-27.mp3](#)

Transcript

00:00:00

Well, let's turn to the scriptures again, this time to the book of Proverbs and it's in Proverbs chapter 4.

00:00:08

I want to read some verses this morning.

00:00:12

Proverbs chapter 4 and I want to begin reading verse 23 down to the end of the chapter.

00:00:21

Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.

00:00:29

Put away from thee a froward mouth, and pervous lips put far from thee.

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Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

00:00:43

Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.

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Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left remove thy foot from evil.

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In John Bunyan's great book, The Holy War, he talks about the city of Mansoul being besieged by the Lord.

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In that siege the outer wall was breached and then street after street was conceded.

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But the citadel or the keep right in the centre of the city, there the flag of rebellion flew defiantly.

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At last it too came down, the citadel surrendered and only then the town had been won.

00:01:37

The heart, your heart, is the citadel of your life, it's the home of your will.

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In the Bible the heart is not just the seat of the affections and the emotions but of the will and that will, the citadel, we as believers

00:01:56

have now yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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And brothers and sisters is to be kept for him.

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So let's think about the heart and how we can keep it.

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Verse 23 it says, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

00:02:20

Whatever your heart is like, from that

00:02:23

comes the very way that you live your life, comes the way you behave, comes all of your life indeed from the heart issuing from the heart.

00:02:34

Well, do you know your heart?

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To know the heart is difficult, but it's necessary.

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It's difficult because we're prone to self-deception.

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It's difficult because self-examination is not something that we like doing.

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and it's hard to do it properly.

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On the one hand we can skip over our faults, on the other we can become introspective and despair of our state.

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However, examination of our heart is necessary because without it we fail to see our weak spots.

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And Satan sees these and he will exploit them to the full.

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That's why we're so often distressed by the sins which so easily beset us.

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But what's the heart like?

00:03:31

Well, we could think of the heart in two different ways or the heart of two different kinds of men.

00:03:38

There's a heart, the unregenerate heart.

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What's that like?

00:03:43

Well, listen, the Bible tells us quite clearly, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

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Who can know?

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So says the prophet Jeremiah.

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Now, when I was just a young Christian, I was told, I was read that verse.

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And of course, you have to agree it's in the Bible, but I'm afraid I didn't really think it was all that profound in my life.

00:04:12

Sadly, as the years have gone past, I see only how true that is.

00:04:18

The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked.

00:04:26

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within and defile

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That's what the unregenerate heart is like, given over to these things.

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It's just a fountain of these wicked things.

00:05:01

But the ungodly are not troubled by this.

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They may be ashamed of the gross and outbreaks of sin, but by and large their consciences are sleepy, dull and deluded.

00:05:16

But thankfully

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We don't have to live with a heart like that.

00:05:23

If you and I are believers then we have a renewed heart and what's that like?

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Well, here there is a tender conscience.

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There's an awareness not just of actions and words which are sinful but of thoughts and of motives as well.

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Often our motives trouble us because we do things, perhaps the right things,

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but we do them from perhaps the wrong motive.

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The flesh, self and pleasure all seek to woo us.

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That's why David could write in one of the Psalms, Unite my heart to fear thy name.

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The renewed heart sadly can be divided like that.

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Also it can be diverted.

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Temptations weave their spells and they lead us into sin.

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The world plausibly seeks to make an enter into it with its standards, its methods and its philosophies.

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John Flavell wrote, The greatest divility in conversion is to win the heart and after conversion to keep it with God.

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This is all of the utmost importance because the Lord says, My son, give me thine heart.

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It's also important for the reason that we have read of this morning.

00:07:01

Out of the heart, out of it are the issues of life.

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Depending on the state of the heart, what proceeds out of it and what proceeds out of it, these issues

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can be good and holy, they can be issues that seek God's glory, they can seek the edification of our brothers and sisters, and they can seek to bring the gospel to men and women.

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Base and dishonouring to the Lord's name can be

00:07:46

and it can be discouraging to others.

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The heart is the fountain, the spring of our actions and the seat of our principles.

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Thus, we have to be diligent in watching over it.

00:08:01

You know, we grow older, we become Christians with pressure on the Christian life and we take things for granted.

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And that's why we have to stop and consider and examine ourselves and look at our hearts

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and see how we are keeping it.

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Neglect or carelessness is foolishness.

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And so we are urged by the Holy Spirit in this book of Proverbs, Keep thy heart.

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Now this is not some sort of moral exhortation, a kind of spiritual pull your socks up.

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No, if we rely on ourselves on this work, it's doomed to failure.

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has been remarked, for example, that men fled from the world into monasteries to escape the world but alas, they found that the world and sin had got there before them.

00:09:03

Do I mean then that this is some kind of passive or mystical way we are to see?

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No, but the method or manner does have two aspects.

00:09:13

Personal responsibility.

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You are responsible for looking at your heart, examining your heart.

00:09:21

You are responsible for keeping your heart.

00:09:27

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

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For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

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So wrote Paul to the Philippians.

00:09:39

Keep yourself in the love of God.

00:09:42

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

00:09:53

Keep yourselves in his love, the love of our God.

00:10:04

How a shepherd keeps his sheep may help us to see the idea.

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The shepherd guides and leads his sheep.

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In the Middle East particularly, the shepherd does lead and goes before the sheep.

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Here, the shepherd tends to be at the back of the sheep, watching over them as they go ahead.

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But in the Far East or in the Middle East, where the scriptures were written, it's the idea of the shepherd leading the sheep.

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How are we led?

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How does our shepherd lead us?

00:10:43

Well, it's a wonderful thing.

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He has given us his book.

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He's given us what we sang.

00:10:52

Lord, thy word abideth and our footsteps guideth.

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It's a wonderful thing to read the scriptures, to maintain that reading constantly, to read it carefully, thoughtfully,

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and to beg the Lord to speak to our hearts as we read it.

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He also guides us through the preaching of the word and Pastor Marley stands here week by week to minister the word of God.

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He brings the truth to your hearts and how you respond is how we are guided.

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We're also guided and helped by the fellowship of the saints

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We look around, we see our brothers and sisters, we perhaps admire some brother for the gifts or the abilities or the way he lives.

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That encourages us and their example leads us and guides us.

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That's why I like reading biographies.

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I like to see how God has led men to see what the effect of that lady has been in their lives.

00:12:05

The first Christian book I ever read was C.T.

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Studd, Cricketer and Pioneer and that whetted my appetite and I've loved to read books, especially biographies ever since then.

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The shepherd feeds and nourishes his sheep and don't you find when you read the scriptures, when you open the Bible and read it for yourself,

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And when you're dry and thirsty and you pray and ask the Lord to help you, how joyful it is when the Lord speaks to you through his word.

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Again, the preaching is of importance because the minister, the pastor brings out perhaps truth that you haven't noticed, haven't recognised as you were reading it for yourself.

00:12:59

And the fellowship of the saints

00:13:01

is another way that we're fed and nourished.

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And also the shepherd guards his sheep.

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He protects them from their enemies, from the wolves and the bears and the lions.

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And the Lord does that for us.

00:13:19

He comes to us and speaks to us.

00:13:22

He warns us when we start to stray, go astray off the path, he speaks to us.

00:13:28

He never just lets us stray and says, oh well, go your own.

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No, no.

00:13:33

He speaks to us.

00:13:34

He calls us back continually.

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But the question is, do we listen?

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Do we heed?

00:13:44

But if we do, then he guards us and guides us.

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Listen to Luther as he talks of our foe, our weaknesses and our security.

00:14:03

The ancient prince of hell is risen with purpose fell.

00:14:08

Strong male of craft and power he weareth in this hour, on earth is not his equal.

00:14:15

With force of arms we nothing can, full soon were we down ridden.

00:14:22

But for us whites the proper man whom God himself hath bidden.

00:14:30

Isn't it wonderful

00:14:32

God has saved us and He doesn't then say now on you go, He's continually with us.

00:14:39

The Saviour is our Saviour, a present Saviour, not a once upon a time Saviour, but a present daily Saviour.

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The Lord Himself has undertaken to keep us and He will lose none of His sheep.

00:15:01

That being the case, can we just sit back, relax, and after all, it's all taken care of.

00:15:08

No, as we saw from Jude and from Philippians, we have a role in the matter.

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We're to keep our hearts diligently with all keeping.

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We're to keep it by strength, by exerting ourselves.

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When temptations come, we're not to roll over and give in to them.

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and say, oh, this is too much for me.

00:15:30

I can't help it.

00:15:31

We can always help it.

00:15:35

And we've not just to submit to temptation, but to battle against it.

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We're to resist and persist in resisting the devil.

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And as you know, that's not easy.

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We're to keep it by help.

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We call on the Lord to assist us and to keep us close to Him.

00:16:04

Crown Him as your captain in temptations.

00:16:09

In the very hour of temptation, when the subtle drawing aside of sin or the world or the flesh, perhaps the last thing we want to do is call on the Lord, but that's what we do.

00:16:26

We yield, we call on him, crowning him as a captain of our lives.

00:16:36

So we keep our heart by strength, by his help and by care.

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We have to be diligent.

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That's to say you and I have to be in earnest about this.

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The Christian life is not just some sort of thing that we've stuck on to our lives.

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It's the very heart and soul of our being.

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And we're to take care by keeping our heart constantly and thoroughly.

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It's a daily necessity.

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The Lord certainly keeps us, but as you see, we have our responsibility in the battle.

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Solomon in the verse we read

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looks at some areas where we would exercise this diligence.

00:17:31

Having told us to keep our hearts, he then gives us instructions on how to be about that business.

00:17:40

To keep a watch over our words.

00:17:44

Put away from thee a froward mouth and perverse lips put far from thee.

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Doesn't James in his letter warn us about the problems of this?

00:17:59

The tongue is a little member that boasts great things.

00:18:03

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.

00:18:10

The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, so is the tongue among the members.

00:18:15

It defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature.

00:18:21

The tongue can no man tame

00:18:24

It's an unruly evil full of deadly poison.

00:18:32

Our tongues can be used to bring great blessing, but also can be used in a very sad way.

00:18:41

No matter how we estimate this, and we tend to think lightly of it, the Lord takes it seriously.

00:18:49

Did you hear the words that he used to describe it?

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A world of iniquity

00:18:54

It defiles.

00:18:56

It's set on fire of hell.

00:18:58

It's an unruly evil, a deadly poison.

00:19:03

That's not an exaggeration.

00:19:05

That is the word of God.

00:19:07

That's God's inspired word concerning your tongue and mine.

00:19:14

A word can be hurtful, causing pain, separating brothers and sisters.

00:19:20

The sin may be forgiven.

00:19:24

But the wound may take a very long time to heal.

00:19:32

We should not run down others, either directly to them or in talking to others about them.

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We are not to deprecate or talk in a slighting fashion about our fellow saints.

00:19:46

We always look for the best

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Love believes all things, hopes all things.

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There's a room for running down our fellow saints there.

00:20:03

We should be very cautious and restrained in criticism, even when it's completely valid.

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And we should not indulge in gossip.

00:20:16

A sister who is guilty of this

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once confessed to our pastor that she had this problem and she asked the pastor for advice.

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He said, Do you realise how bad this is, how serious it is?

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Oh yeah, she said quite offhandedly.

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He said, Fine.

00:20:37

He said, Take a pillow and cut it open and leave it out in the wind tonight and come back and see me tomorrow.

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When she returned in the morning, he said to her, Now, sister, go and gather up all the feathers.

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As you can imagine, she found it no more possible than to undo all the words of gossip.

00:21:07

And that's what gossip does.

00:21:09

It flutters about, spreads about, and is so hard to recover.

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Words can have more than a measure of pride.

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We can say something just to look good.

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We can hog a conversation as though only our views mattered and nobody else gets a look in.

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Or it's just that we want to win an argument so that we can be the king of the castle.

00:21:41

Or sometimes our words want to just put someone down.

00:21:47

them in their plates.

00:21:47

Is that all very negative?

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Alas yes, but we can use our words in our tongues to benefit and positively as well.

00:22:01

A word of thanks or appreciation is much a real blessing and a benefit and how often we miss the opportunity.

00:22:16

a word of witness to some soul.

00:22:18

How it fools our souls with the opportunity to tell others of the Lord Jesus and what he's done in our hearts, what he means to us and to witness to them of that.

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And among the saints, godly spiritual conversation is so profitable.

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And we can even praise other people.

00:22:43

We can tell

00:22:45

a brother or a sister.

00:22:46

Do you not think so and so is a good example?

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Do you not think that was a good word that the pastor brought on Sunday?

00:22:56

Keep your lips, says the prophet, says the proverb.

00:23:01

And we have to guard our eyes.

00:23:05

While the mouth is an outgoing for evil, the eye is the most dangerous entrance for it.

00:23:14

Almost the first tendency to evil we read about in the Bible is when evil saw the fruit that it was good, pleasant to the eyes and desirable to make one wise.

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Our look, whether to self-centered, self-interested, God-forgetting attitudes.

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That's the way of sin.

00:23:43

It focuses on our pleasure, our desire, our satisfaction, and it turns our eyes away from the Lord.

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When we look away from the cross, when we turn our eyes away, we're turning away from the Saviour.

00:24:11

We can think of Achan, how his eyes led him into covetousness,

00:24:17

a smart Babylonian robe, 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold.

00:24:26

And his eyes turned away.

00:24:29

There he was in the midst of the people about, well, not about, but entering into the promised land, the very land, the whole land lay before them.

00:24:43

And his eyes led him into covetousness.

00:24:51

About two decades ago covetousness in high places almost ruined and almost destroyed our nation's economy and still individuals and institutions have not learned the lessons that they should have learned.

00:25:10

Beware of letting covetousness poison your soul.

00:25:18

And what can we see of David loitering in a rooftop looking at Bathsheba?

00:25:25

His eyes and his eyelids were far from looking straight in the Lord's ways.

00:25:31

Dallying led to desire and desire to the intent to the sin.

00:25:42

David wasn't a heathen.

00:25:45

David wasn't an unbeliever.

00:25:47

David had been greatly blessed of God, but all that was put aside as he followed the sinful look of his eyes.

00:26:03

Beware of what you look at, beware of what you watch and what you do with your eyes.

00:26:25

We could go on about that.

00:26:28

You could think of many other examples, but I don't need to.

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The warning is clear.

00:26:36

The ploughman who looks back will certainly not plough a straight furrow, a useful furrow, and is in danger of being pronounced unfit for the kingdom

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What are we to do?

00:26:51

Run the race looking unto Jesus, looking unto our Saviour and remembering the cross.

00:27:01

You know, it's an awful thing but you have to think of you when you sin, when you do something wrong, when you do something wicked,

00:27:11

You're adding to the Saviour's burden.

00:27:13

These sins have got to be paid for and he bore our sins in his own body on the cross.

00:27:20

Surely we don't want to add to that burden.

00:27:28

We could think of our Lord Jesus, how kind he is to us, the most caring and kind of masters.

00:27:36

And we could think of the Lord Jesus, our King of glory,

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exalted at the right hand of the Majesty and I, and worthy of all praise.

00:27:50

Set your eyes upon heaven for eternity, and all here who have paid may gone.

00:28:02

Samuel Rawford said our first night in heaven will make us forget all the trials and tribulations

00:28:10

of this poor world keep your eyes and then in verse 26 and 27 ponder the path of your feet let all thy ways be established turn not to the right hand nor to the left remove thy feet from evil Solomon is not talking here about guidance

00:28:40

but our goal and the destination that we are aiming to reach.

00:28:45

He says we're to ponder on that, think about where we're going, think about what we're aiming for.

00:28:56

So where are you going?

00:28:59

Are you going to heaven?

00:29:02

Are you saved?

00:29:05

For all I know somebody might be sitting here this morning

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And all of this is just strangeness to them.

00:29:13

They don't know the Lord Jesus Christ.

00:29:15

They've never yielded their heart to the Saviour.

00:29:21

They've never asked him to take over their lives.

00:29:25

Many a person is double minded about this and they want to go to heaven.

00:29:30

Oh yes, but the world is very pleasing.

00:29:35

Maybe like Demas, they found it too pleasing.

00:29:39

So examine your heart, think about that.

00:29:46

Answer carefully and truthfully.

00:29:51

We used to sing a wee chorus, we don't sing it much now, but the wee chorus we used to sing, I've decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back.

00:30:07

No turning back.

00:30:10

I trust by God's grace that is your testimony.

00:30:16

We're going to be with the Lord Jesus.

00:30:19

That is our goal.

00:30:22

I don't know what you imagine heaven as, I think it was Ted Donnery that said that when he was young he thought of heaven as being a place where you sat on marble benches playing harps and singing hymns and said

00:30:36

I didn't want to go to heaven, but that was all it was.

00:30:40

But it's this fellowship with the Lord.

00:30:43

It's like sweet comfort of knowing him in his very presence.

00:30:48

I think I love the idea, we read in Genesis, in the cool of the day, the Lord came to and called for that.

00:30:55

Where are you, Adam?

00:30:58

Because the Lord came and Adam enjoyed fellowship daily, personally,

00:31:05

with the Lord.

00:31:06

Heaven at least is going to be that.

00:31:12

So is that where you're going?

00:31:17

What's the route?

00:31:20

When I go from Glasgow to Wick I have various options as to which route I take.

00:31:26

I can go up by A9 or I can go up by A82 but going to heaven there's no choices.

00:31:36

To heaven and home it's the way of the cross, that's the way the Saviour went and it's the way that we must follow still.

00:31:46

So are you on the right route?

00:31:48

But the question is also how are you progressing?

00:31:52

Some days we're running the race, some days it's barely all we can do to stand still.

00:32:01

I've always liked William Carey's statement

00:32:05

I cannot do much, but I can plod.

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Well, how he plodded.

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For example, he'd been working on a dictionary of the languages derived from Sanskrit.

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He was planning the printing of many other books for believers in India, when a disastrous fire raging for three days destroyed many of the manuscripts.

00:32:33

the lead type and his precious.

00:32:38

What did he do?

00:32:41

Well, he started again.

00:32:42

That's what he did.

00:32:45

He started all over again.

00:32:48

You and I, we often face difficulties.

00:32:53

You and I, we often have setbacks, but we're not for turning back.

00:33:04

Ponder the path of your feet, let your ways be established, because there's always the danger of being turned aside.

00:33:13

Remember how Christian in Pilgrim's Progress decided that the way to heaven was awful hard and he thought Bypass Meadow, this lovely green grassy slope, looked much more attractive.

00:33:28

And so he hopped over the fence

00:33:31

and went his way and bypassed Meadow.

00:33:34

But alas, it led to captivity in Doubting Castle.

00:33:45

But there are dangers on the road.

00:33:47

Satan will try to deceive us when he presents some sin to us.

00:33:54

And he comes with a temptation and he tells you, Oh, there's nothing.

00:33:58

John, there's nothing much.

00:33:59

John, why are you so fussed about it?

00:34:01

It doesn't really matter.

00:34:05

It's just like a wee puddle in the road.

00:34:07

You can walk through it dry shod, you're leaving your feet wet.

00:34:14

But if you're successful into temptation, then when you're in it, you find it's more like a swamp than a puddle.

00:34:22

He's then telling you, Ah, you're lost.

00:34:26

Imagine you doing a thing like, how can you be a Christian when you've done something like that?

00:34:34

Enter not into the path of the wicked, go not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.

00:34:46

The scripture is quite emphatic, quite determined about this.

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And sometimes too, there are doubtful courses of action.

00:35:03

A prophet was sent to rebuke King Jeroboam.

00:35:06

He'd been told clearly by the Lord not to eat anything or drink anything when he was in the land of Israel.

00:35:15

An old prophet lied to him and enticed him to come home with him for a meal.

00:35:21

Now he had a clear command from God not to eat anything in that land.

00:35:28

But after all, this old man was a prophet too.

00:35:34

And he was hungry.

00:35:38

So why not just have a quick bite to eat?

00:35:43

Well, he perished.

00:35:45

And you can read about in First Kings chapter 13, a lion attacked him and killed him.

00:35:56

There are many

00:35:58

dangers so ponder your ways don't turn to the right or the left and remember the Lord our shepherd always leads us in paths of righteousness so keep your feet finally let me remind you that in keeping our heart we are dealing up just with actions with what we do

00:36:32

But with our attitudes.

00:36:34

That's what the whole business is about.

00:36:37

The attitude of our heart will determine how we think and speak and act.

00:36:44

What Proverbs calls the issues of life.

00:36:50

If the spring is polluted the water will be polluted.

00:36:54

If the spring is clear and clean the water will be clean and wholesome.

00:37:03

We started considering that we had to take great care of our heart because from it flow all the issues of our life.

00:37:14

We've been advised by the wise writer to keep our lips, to keep our eyes and to keep our feet as ways of keeping our heart.

00:37:30

Solomon the writer failed to heed his own advice and he fell into idolatry.

00:37:42

Take care to heed his advice and not to follow his example.

00:37:49

Above all maintain your fellowship with the Father and with his Son in a loving lively way

00:37:59

A heart enamoured with God is well equipped to keep from danger.

00:38:09

Keep your heart with all diligence.

00:38:14

May the Lord give us grace so to do.

00:38:19

Amen.

00:38:21

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless

00:38:27

before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.

00:38:44

Amen.