

ESF Lord's day sermon
2/10/2019
Rev. Jaeuk Jeong

Guard Your Heart That God Has Given You

Proverbs 4:20 ~ 27

Guarding one's heart

God created man, us, as physical and spiritual being at the same time. Though this question will sound a little awkward or even foolish, which part of us is more important, our body or our spirit? Yes, we know we absolutely need both of them, but we can also all agree that our spirit has more precedence. So, James 2:26 says, "The body without the spirit is dead." Whether a person is dead or living is not decided by our body but by our spirit. When the spirit leaves our body, we call it death though we still have our body.

And, our spirit is also called "the heart." In today's text, in verse 23, heart is the place out of which the spring of life flows. And, our heart is our inmost being, the very seat of our whole being. Because of this supreme significance of our heart for our life itself, God commands us to guard our heart above all else.

Spiritual battle – the spiritual reality

When one's eyes are closed to the spiritual realm, though they see and hear and think and feel, they do not know why they are constantly anxious, fearful, volatile with anger, guilty, meaningless, and etc. However, when the light of the gospel message enters our heart, as Jesus says in John 8:12, because of Jesus who is the light of the world, we begin to see the spiritual reality. And, the word of God exposes the hidden spiritual reality. One of the clearest spiritual realities we Christians all the time should remember without failure is that we are living in a spiritual world. From the beginning of the world in the Garden of Eden to the end of the world when Jesus will come back, the spiritual battle will neither end nor rest. The fact that you need to guard your heart means that there is somebody trying to beat you down, knock you down, and finally kill you. Proverbs 4:20 ~ 21 shows the tremendous intensity of the spiritual battle we are constantly engaged in. It is almost like a bloody scene in the fierce boxing ring. It seems like the father draws the full attention of his son in the boxing ring to pay attention to what he says, listen closely to his words, and remember all the directions he is giving him. In the real life

setting, the spiritual battle is much more tricky and brutal because the enemy will attack us any time through all possible ways until he steals, kills, and destroys us as written in John 10:10.

Why to guard our heart

When God designed our body, He put the most important organs such as brain or heart in the deepest places of our body. Our brain is surrounded and protected by the thick skull, and our heart is also safeguarded by the ribs. However, the Bible calls our human spirit the **inmost being**. Literally, in the deepest part of us, what is there is not brain, not physical heart, but our spirit. So, our spirit or our heart is the most critical and the most important in us. And, we need to guard it.

1. Guard your heart because it is the source of life

Why and when do we guard anything? Because it has a significant value for us. When something is critical and vital for our safety or our life, we are to guard it with all diligence. Accordingly, the heart we should guard is the right heart that is called as the source of life in verse 23. But, Jesus, who made our inside as well as outside, says in Mark 7:15, “Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into man. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” Explaining the meaning of this, Jesus clearly says, “from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thought, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.” If this is the right description of our heart, because it was assessed by Jesus, the Creator of our hearts, it seems better for us to give up or throw away this kind of corrupt and sinful hearts. So, some one rightly said, “Our hearts are sin-factories.” There seems to be no reason to guard this kind of heart.

If our hearts are so sin-saturated and evil-possessed, then, when God wants us to guard our hearts, what kind of heart is that? When Israel was going to be destroyed because of their idolatry and horrible wickedness and sins, God spoke to the Israelite people through the prophet Jeremiah as in Jeremiah 31:33, “This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” This promise was given around older than 586 B.C., around 600 years before Jesus. God wanted to give a new heart to His people by writing down the new law in their heart, not like the laws in the Old Testament. And, this promise was fulfilled through Jesus’ death and resurrection. 2 Corinthians

5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” When we were saved in Jesus, we became a new creation. God gave us a new heart, with renewed conscience and renewed sensitivity to the deadly sins. The old law told us, “You shall not murder,” but Jesus gives us his new law in Matthew 5, “If we are angry with our brothers or sisters, if we ignore or contempt any person calling them a fool, it is equated with killing a person. The old law tells us not to commit adultery, but Jesus says “if anyone looks at a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery.” As the creator of our hearts, Jesus revealed the hidden spiritual truth, the principle of spiritual battle. Jesus’ words in the Bible renew and recreate our dead conscience, which has been like dead battery. Proverbs 4:23 tells us to keep this renewed heart, the re-created and revived heart through the salvation in Jesus Christ. Guarding our new heart given through Jesus is guarding our eternal life, the true life knowing God and His Son, Jesus Christ. We should guard our heart with vigilance and diligence, because, as mentioned before, we are in constant spiritual battle with the Satan and the devils who try to steal away the faith and the life God gave us. Ultimately the Satan does not fight against us but against God. This is the spiritual battle.

2. Guard your heart because it keeps you whole, healthy, and blessed (v.22)

Mentally or spiritually ill people usually lose their health and relationship. When they lose their heart, it leads to the destruction of other parts of life. Unhealthy stale heart is like the inmost organ of a dead fish that decays first. The poison of deadness in the inmost place spreads to the all the other parts of the fish. When guarding our heart pure and healthy, all the other parts of our life are blessed. In Proverbs 4:21-22, the father tries to draw his son’s attention to what he says, because the father says, when his son keeps and follows what he teaches, what he tries to teach his son is life itself to his son and it will even bring health to his son’s body. And, the core of his teaching is guarding the heart. When a Christian guards his/her heart renewed by Jesus’ blood, it brings all the true blessings. When we keep our hearts pure, it brings integrity, good self-esteem, self-control, while driving out shame and guilt. When we keep our hearts humble, it brings peace with others, much less anger, and much better relationship with others. When we keep our hearts thankful, it brings much more joy and better health. In fact, most of the diseases we suffer come from stressful and unhealthy heart, which ends up bringing broken relationship, distracted life style, much less efficiency in work and ministry, meaninglessness, and so forth. Our heart is like the controlling tower or the cockpit in an airplane. Even when everything is OK in the airplane but the pilot cannot fly

the airplane, it will face a great danger soon. Guarding our heart has the central importance in our life. When we guard our heart, it brings good health, true happiness, and fulfillment of God's will in one's life.

How to guard our heart

1. Use God's word as defense (v.20-21)

Father God in verse 20 and 21 repeatedly and strongly draws His son's attention to His words. His words are the words of life. Keeping them and obeying them is the guideline for life. When we use God's words as defense, actually they also become the sword of the Spirit against the Satan. In Matthew 4:3, 6, the devil doggedly attacked Jesus, saying, "if you are the Son of God." As the Satan attacked Jesus' Sonship through God's word, the enemy continuously attacks your sonship or daughter-ship through sin and guilt. Our new status in Jesus is actually the biggest what-to-guard part in our heart. In this battle, the Holy Spirit is called the Advocate who works like a lawyer for you and the enemy is the Accuser. The Holy Spirit will continuously try to encourage you to keep following God as His saved and beloved one and the enemy Accuser will ceaselessly try to make you feel helpless about your sin and finally quit your spiritual journey with God. In this case, salvation only by grace, not by works in Ephesians 2:8 is a good defense and offense against the enemy: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." When we turn to God's word that confirms the security of our sonship and daughter-ship through grace shown in Jesus' cross and blood, it helps us to fight against the Satan's dogged lies about our shortcomings.

2. Curb your output from your mouth (v.24)

Our mouth finalizes what our hearts try to produce. Though our heart mainly produces our words, when we try to control our mouth, we begin to have more control over our heart, too. Instead of complaints, when we try to say words of thanksgiving and love, it changes situations and our hearts. Verse 24 commands us to put away perverse words, in other words, deviated words. This means that we should not say whatever comes to our thoughts. When some words that deviate from God's good will occur to us, we should not utter it. We need to know that those words neither come from God nor from our renewed heart. In most of the cases, those negative, destructive, and dirty words come from the devils. When guarding our hearts, in most of the times, we begin to perceive that it is related to the words in our thoughts. Our old sinful self and the enemy Satan bring a lot of

dirty thoughts and words to our hearts. We should not agree with the Satan. He will try to make you agree that those dirty and evil thoughts and words are yours. But, we should reject the Satan, telling back to him that we are a new creation in Jesus Christ. James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Here, resisting the devil, in most of the cases, is resisting the evil, dirty, and destructive words and thoughts. We need to curb our mouth. Verse 24 also commands us to stop speaking corrupt words such as vulgar, dirty, sexually obscene jokes, etc. Don’t say whatever comes to your heart, but if it is not in line with God’s words, resist it and do not utter it. Don’t say much but say words of love, blessing, thanksgiving, and life. Our words have a tremendous power over our life.

3. Select your input into your eyes (v.25)

As the secular proverb “Seeing is believing,” seeing and watching has enormous power upon our hearts. What we see and hear composes our hearts. What we see, hear, and watch composes our inner world, our spirit. So, being picky and selective for the better health of our hearts is more important than the physical diet. Now, we are living in a world filled with all kinds of media. Our eyes and ears are continuously bombarded by ceaseless media attacks. You see all kinds of useless but harmful advertisements whether you want it or not. You hear all kinds of music wherever you go. You open social medias and watch sports, dramas, and movies without stopping. However, most of the contents you listen to or watch are made because of human greed, greed for money and pleasure. So, most of them are not healthy. When you devour all those wrong messages and images into your hearts, your hearts get sick. You don’t know why. But, you feel stressed, dissatisfied, anxious, and lustful. You come to the church and worship weekly, but your heart roams and wanders. You cannot get the core of life or the true integrity of your hearts. You feel continuous guilt and spiritual fatigue because you do not guard your heart but instead you pour the unhealthy things of the world into your spirit in the name of culture or enjoying leisure time. The biggest enemy to Christian faith in today’s world is media. If you do not control over your using media such as social media like Facebook, Twitter, or grossing app such as WeChat, Kakaotalk, Line, or Whatsapp, or Youtube, video, films, and so forth, you will never grow in the true meaningful relationship with God. Many media contents are very evil and satanic. And, at the same time, even seemingly good media are very harmful too, because they easily make people addicted to it. So, the greatest spiritual battle Christians need to actively fight against is that of media. Be selective in using media and have media-fasting regularly.

4. Preventative life-style (v.26-27)

Those who love fighting perish because of fighting. Though we need to fight the spiritual battle until we enter the heaven, when we jump in the vulnerable situations, we will be exposed to the dangers. So, developing the preventative life-style is more effective. Are you facing formidable temptation because of drinking? You need to quit drinking alcohol in an improper place. Are you facing sexual temptation because of pornography? You need to confess the sin to the loving community or your pastor. You need to ask the Spirit' healing over your life and make you clean. You need to make an accountability partner and seek for the help from the person. Are you speaking useless, unnecessary, negative words? Then, make a decision not to say any negative words for about a week and you will begin to build up some self-control over your mouth. Are you fighting against media addiction? Try to have one week or one month media fasting while trying to read God's words and pray during that time. This will greatly increase your spiritual sensitivity and self-control.

Lastly, remember this. Just like the father's passionate love toward his son in today's text, our Father God continuously speaks to us, tries to draw our attention to Him, protects us, encourages us, trains us that we can fight the spiritual battle courageously and victoriously. Our true weapon and defense is Jesus' blood, His love and forgiveness, and the help of the Holy Spirit. Let's live victorious and glorious Christian life that God be honored through our life.