



## Watch Your Heart

Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, \_\_\_\_\_ your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” Since your heart is the wellspring of life, guard it \_\_\_\_\_. The Scriptures \_\_\_\_\_ us about the heart of God and how He’s dealt with individuals and with humanity through the \_\_\_\_\_. They reveal His \_\_\_\_\_ and His warnings. They reveal His \_\_\_\_\_ and His wrath. The Scriptures also teach us about our own \_\_\_\_\_, what God desires and what God condemns. In all of this is the nature of the heart, it’s what \_\_\_\_\_ our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, and our destiny. That’s why knowing what God says about the heart is so vital.

As the wellspring of life, the heart is where so many things in our lives \_\_\_\_\_. We’re loved by others, and it \_\_\_\_\_ us to love them back. We’re \_\_\_\_\_ by others, and it may cause us to strike back. The heart is \_\_\_\_\_ with thoughts and emotions. Some are \_\_\_\_\_ emotions like love, joy, compassion, and hope. Other emotions \_\_\_\_\_ to sin and heartache. The Lord Jesus said, “For the mouth speaks out of that which \_\_\_\_\_ the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out his evil treasure what is evil” (Matthew 12:34-35). We have to ask, what’s coming out of your heart?

The things coming from your heart are the very things that you’re \_\_\_\_\_ into your heart. If you feed on the selfish, the fleshly, the worldly, you’ll \_\_\_\_\_ things that are selfish, fleshly, and worldly. Romans 12:2 urges us, “And do not be conformed to this \_\_\_\_\_, but be transformed by the renewing of your \_\_\_\_\_, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Our reading is from **The Gospel According to Matthew 26:36-41**, in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The battle between good and evil, the battle for your soul and eternal destiny, \_\_\_\_\_ within the heart. God Himself says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can \_\_\_\_\_ it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the \_\_\_\_\_ of his deeds” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). Because this battle between our willingness to serve God and the weakness of our flesh is \_\_\_\_\_ we must watch our hearts and pray that we do not enter into temptation to sin.

Temptations can hit us suddenly without \_\_\_\_\_ or they can lie dormant in our hearts and arise when we’re \_\_\_\_\_. Luke 4:13 says, “When the devil had finished every temptation (that is, on Jesus), he left Him until an opportune time.” The devil knows when to \_\_\_\_\_ to our flesh, our eyes, or our pride. If we’re not alert and ready, we can easily \_\_\_\_\_ into the devil’s schemes. He’s looking for an opportune time! First Peter 5:8-9 says, “Be of sober spirit, be on the \_\_\_\_\_. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring \_\_\_\_\_, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your \_\_\_\_\_, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

Let’s talk about some of those schemes as they relate to our hearts. First, the devil loves to make our hearts \_\_\_\_\_. The Lord Jesus said, “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ But I say to you that everyone who

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is \_\_\_\_\_ with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:21-22).

James 1:19-20 reminds us, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to \_\_\_\_\_, slow to \_\_\_\_\_, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God." What do we do when we get angry? Ephesians 4:26-27 explains, "Be angry and do not \_\_\_\_\_; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give \_\_\_\_\_ opportunity to the devil." We must \_\_\_\_\_ our emotions and learn to be patient and to bear with one another.

Second, when anger continually burns in the heart, it \_\_\_\_\_ to hatred, bitterness, and revenge. Bitterness describes the twisted way individuals \_\_\_\_\_ to painful events. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be \_\_\_\_\_ from you, along with all malice. Be \_\_\_\_\_ to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." The Lord Jesus faced all kinds of horrible injustices, insults, and cruelty. While suffering, He didn't "threaten, but He continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). Jesus left us this \_\_\_\_\_, so that we might follow in His steps."

Revenge is \_\_\_\_\_ back evil for evil. The Lord Jesus taught, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38-39). Christians depend on God to \_\_\_\_\_ with evildoers. Romans 12:17-21 says, "Repay no one evil for evil, but give \_\_\_\_\_ to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on \_\_\_\_\_, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but \_\_\_\_\_ it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he's thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with \_\_\_\_\_." A heart that must take revenge only leads to more anger, hatred, and violence. We don't overcome with vengeful violence; we overcome by showing the love of Christ.

Third, Christians are to love and treat everyone with \_\_\_\_\_. God doesn't show favoritism; He is no respecter of persons. The Jewish apostle Peter went to the Gentile home of Cornelius at God's \_\_\_\_\_. He told the people, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to \_\_\_\_\_ partiality, but in every nation the man who \_\_\_\_\_ Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Acts 10:34-35). It doesn't matter to God who you are or where you came from, God will \_\_\_\_\_ you when you fear Him and do what is right.

God doesn't see us like \_\_\_\_\_ sees us. He \_\_\_\_\_ what's in our hearts. He doesn't look at \_\_\_\_\_ appearance; He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He knows our hearts determine what we say and how we \_\_\_\_\_. God is fair and He treats everyone alike. He will "render to each person according to his \_\_\_\_\_" (Romans 2:6). Why? Because his deeds reflect his heart.

When Jesus died upon the cross, He died for every person in every nation for \_\_\_\_\_ time. Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for \_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 2:9). He himself is the propitiation (that is, the atoning sacrifice) for our \_\_\_\_\_; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world (1 John 2:2). The Father wants everyone to be \_\_\_\_\_ and to know the truth (1 Timothy 2:3-4). It's clear from Scripture that God treats every person fairly and wants what is \_\_\_\_\_ for all of us.

Not only that, He wants His children to \_\_\_\_\_ His example. He wants all of His children, every Christian, to want \_\_\_\_\_ others to be saved and to know the truth. The Lord Jesus said, "You have heard

that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and \_\_\_\_\_ for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and He sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:43-45). If you call yourself a child of God, and then act like a child of the devil, then you're doing the \_\_\_\_\_ thing. Why show love to all people? Ephesians 5:1-2 says, "Therefore be \_\_\_\_\_ of God, as beloved children. And \_\_\_\_\_ in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." A heart that loves God and loves others is like a fragrant offering; it's \_\_\_\_\_ to both God and to man.

Sadly, some fail to love and respect people who \_\_\_\_\_ from them. They love those who are \_\_\_\_\_ themselves and dislike everyone else. This failure to love others who are different is not unique to any one group; and it can \_\_\_\_\_ any individual, any class, or any race. It's easy to point your finger at others and \_\_\_\_\_ your own failings. Be careful \_\_\_\_\_ you judge others; because you yourself may be \_\_\_\_\_ of doing the same thing (Romans 2:20-23). Prejudice, bias, and hate can \_\_\_\_\_ anyone. Stereotyping and labeling an entire class—any class—is both unwarranted and unfair and unchristian. No class, no group, and no individual are so \_\_\_\_\_ that they may show partiality to other human beings.

James 2:8-9 says, "If, however, you are fulfilling the \_\_\_\_\_ law according to the Scripture, that 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you're doing well. But if you \_\_\_\_\_ partiality (that is, respect of persons), you're committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors." So, let's examine our own hearts, watch our own mouths and behavior towards others that we may not disrespect anyone, anywhere at any time. Each of us can \_\_\_\_\_ our hearts, and perhaps that will lead others to change.

Prejudice takes place when someone judges another before \_\_\_\_\_ the evidence. This is not fair or kind, but presumptuous. Since we don't know the \_\_\_\_\_ of other people's hearts we've got to be careful not to judge ignorantly. The Lord warns us against \_\_\_\_\_ judging of others, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the \_\_\_\_\_ you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck that's in your brother's eye, but do not \_\_\_\_\_ the log that's in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

Some, who ignore the behavior of the judgmental Pharisees, think Jesus is here saying that we should \_\_\_\_\_ judge anything; but Jesus is here speaking of unfair judging. He's speaking against how \_\_\_\_\_ in those days were judging others by human standards and not God's. The Lord Jesus also said, "Don't judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment" (John 7:24). There is a time to judge righteously, but make sure you know all the \_\_\_\_\_. Some look only at the surface without getting the \_\_\_\_\_ story. They jump to conclusions quickly and assume the \_\_\_\_\_. Proverbs 18:17 says, "The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."

The apostle John tells of the man who put himself \_\_\_\_\_ and thought he was in charge of the church. John said, "I've written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, doesn't acknowledge our authority. So if I come, I'll bring up what he's doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to \_\_\_\_\_ the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church" (3 John 9-10). The authority that we must acknowledge today is not in man but in God and in His inspired \_\_\_\_\_. Pride led Diotrephes to trust in himself rather

than \_\_\_\_\_ to God. Please see the difference between man-made laws and God's laws. God will \_\_\_\_\_ us according to His inspired teaching found in Scripture, and all the pride and arrogance in the world cannot change what God says.

Fourth, some have \_\_\_\_\_ hearts. I've known some whose heart has hardened against God and against the Word of God. They say, "I don't care what anyone says, and I don't care what the Bible says. I'm going to do what I \_\_\_\_\_." You can't reason with such people. People who oppose what the Lord clearly says in Scripture reveal this stubborn heart and place their \_\_\_\_\_ in jeopardy. Some don't want to admit sin is sin. Some would rather listen to some human myth rather than hear God's teaching; they have no desire to obey. They've removed God from their hearts.

Matthew 13:14-15 describes the hard-hearted Jewish leaders in the days of Jesus, "Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: 'You will indeed \_\_\_\_\_ but you'll never understand, you will indeed \_\_\_\_\_ but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'" Where is your heart? Have you allowed it to be hardened against God, against Christ, against God's morals, or against God's church?

Hebrews 3:12-13 says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Without realizing it, we can let our hearts become hardened against God. When people fall to temptation, they may grow to love sin more than they love God. This love for sin will deceive them about God and about their souls.

I hear people refer to sinful relationships and sinful behaviors and then use the word "\_\_\_\_\_", and they think that love justifies them, but they're deceiving themselves. Love doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ sin into sinless-ness; it doesn't turn what is immoral into what is moral. Using the word love doesn't change God's Word. Love may explain what one is doing, but it doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ sin. When someone points out sin as sin, people who practice that sin may react one of three ways. They may \_\_\_\_\_ their hearts and give up their sin; they may \_\_\_\_\_ God and His Word; or they may say God's Word doesn't \_\_\_\_\_ what it says, and they get angry at God and strike out against anything that God teaches. We pray that they'll humble their hearts to God and be obedient.

Your heart will determine your choice to obey sin or to obey righteousness. To become a Christian, believe and trust the Lord, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Do it today!