

Keeping The Heart

The Text

Proverbs 4:20–27

²⁰ My son, attend to my words; Incline thine ear unto my sayings.

²¹ Let them not depart from thine eyes; Keep them in the midst of thine heart.

²² For they *are* life unto those that find them, And health to all their flesh.

²³ Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it *are* the issues of life.

²⁴ Put away from thee a froward mouth, And perverse lips put far from thee.

²⁵ Let thine eyes look right on, And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

²⁶ Ponder the path of thy feet, And let all thy ways be established.

²⁷ Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: Remove thy foot from evil.

The Explication

In verse twenty-three we see the divine prescription of sanctification.

That is, we see an exhortation, which is to “Keep thy heart with all diligence.”

And we see the reason, or the motive for enforcing that exhortation, which is “For out of it are the issues of life.”

That is, the requirement, the necessity for the believer's active participation in sanctification.

V. 23

Keep

Let us begin our consideration with the action, which is found in the beginning of verse twenty-three in the word “*Keep*.”

This English word keep is a verb, and it is an active verb, and it means, to quote from Noah Webster’s dictionary

1. To hold; to retain in one’s power or possession; not to lose or part with.
2. To have in custody for security or preservation.
3. To preserve; to watch over, or to retain.

This translation comes from the Hebrew word *natsar*, meaning “to watch”, or “to guard”, or “to keep.”

[Exodus 34:7](#) “7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”

“keeping” the covenant in [Deuteronomy 33:9](#)

“keeping” the law as found ten times in [Psalm 119](#).

Thy Heart

[Genesis 6:5](#), when God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was evil continually.

It can refer to the organ of the body as we see in [Exodus 28:29](#), when Aaron must bear the breastplate of judgment upon his heart.

It can refer to the inner man as we see in [1 Samuel 16:7](#), where we learn that although man looks to the outward appearance, the LORD looketh upon the heart.

It is used to refer to the understanding of man as we see in [Romans 1:21](#) “21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither

were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

It is also used to refer to the memory as seen in [Psalm 119:11](#) “11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, That I might not sin against thee.”

In fact it can be the desire or inclination as we see in [Exodus 7:14](#), where we know that Pharaoh’s heart was hardened.

[Deuteronomy 4:9](#) “9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently”

For the state of the whole body depends upon the soundness and strength of the heart, and the eternal state of the whole man depends upon the good condition of the soul.

With All Diligence

[Job 31:1](#) “1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; Why then should I think upon a maid?”

[Psalm 34:13](#) “13 Keep thy tongue from evil, And thy lips from speaking guile.”

[Ecclesiastes 5:1](#) “1 Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.”

Thus, we are to keep our hearts, our will and affections like a soldier stationed at a prison keeping all of the prisoners of the flesh under constant supervision until his shift has ended, that is until our Lord returns or until he calls us home.

For Out of It are the Issues of Life

For out of a heart well kept will flow living issues, good produce as it were to the glory of God and to the edification of others.

Yet, out of a heart badly kept will flow all deadly issues, all vile produce as it were to the wrath of God and to the tearing down of others.

Therefore, the measure of a Christian's keeping the heart can be found in their actions.

The Doctrines of The Text That the Keeping and Managing of the Heart in Every condition is the great business of a Christian's Life

[Psalm 119:80](#) "80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; That I be not ashamed."

[Psalm 86:11](#) "11 Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name."

[Philippians 3:19](#) "19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"

[Ephesians 4:24](#) "24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Which requires that our heart is kept, that is managed and maintained in the christian frame.

To perform this maintenance let us

Observe

Psalm 77:6

⁶ I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: And my spirit made diligent search.

We cannot keep the heart unless we first commune with it and diligently search it.

Humiliation of Heart Evils

[2 Chronicles 32:26](#) "26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah."

The Whole Works of the Reverend John Flavel, Volumes 1-6 A Saint Indeed, &c.

It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye, which is a fit emblem of it, if a small dust get into the eye, it will never leave twinkling and watering till it have wept it out: So the upright heart cannot be at rest till it have wept out its troubles, and poured out its complaints before the Lord.

Earnest Supplication

[Psalm 19:12](#) “12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

[Psalm 86:11](#) “11 Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name.”

Strongly Engage an Accurate Walk

[Job 31:1](#) “1 I made a covenant with mine eyes; Why then should I think upon a maid?”

Holy Jealousy

[Proverbs 4:26–27](#) “26 Ponder the path of thy feet, And let all thy ways be established. 27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: Remove thy foot from evil.”

Walking Before God

[Genesis 17:1](#) “1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.”

The Uses of The Text

Exhortation To Keep The Heart

[Deuteronomy 6:5](#) “5 And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”

[Matthew 22:37](#) “37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

Admonishment To Keep The Heart

- › Is there a particular area in our lives that we have neglected to keep our hearts?
- › Is there a particular emotion that when it is experienced we have neglected to control our wills?
- › Are we in a particular season in life, where we have abandoned or otherwise reduced our duty to this command?

Exhortation To Know The Scriptures

[Psalm 1:2](#) “2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord; And in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

[Psalm 19:8](#) “8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

Exhortation To Ask For Sanctification

[James 1:17](#) “17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

[Psalm 5:8](#) “8 Lead me, O Lord, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; Make thy way straight before my face.”

Exhortation To Practice Sanctification

[John 15:5](#) in speaking of himself as the vine and believers as the branches, where we read “Without me ye can do nothing.”

Exhortation To Self Examination

Lastly, we have an exhortation to self examination.

We learned that our actions are but a measurement of how well we keep this duty.

> **Have we measured our actions?**