

GUARD YOUR HEART BY PROTECTING YOUR EYES

INTRODUCTION:

Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Proverbs 4:23. Several weeks ago, I shared with you the thought that our heart is like a reservoir. How is our heart—our innermost being—like a reservoir? First, because what is in our heart flows out—it expresses itself—in what we do, say, and think. Jesus said as much in **Mark 7:21-23** “For **from within, out of the heart of men, proceed** evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness [sensual; sex-driven], an evil eye [envy], blasphemy, pride, foolishness: ²³ All these evil things **come from within**, and defile the man.”

Second, our heart is like a reservoir because things don't just **come out**—there are also things that **go into** the reservoir—and our heart—that affect both. Just as a reservoir needs to be guarded to ensure chemicals, garbage, and sewage aren't dumped into it; we need to guard our heart to ensure impurities don't enter in and “pollute” our heart.

We have then, in verse 23, the **command** to “Keep our heart with all diligence” and the **reason** we should guard it—because our heart affects every aspect of our life. In addition to the **what** and the **why**, God also tells us **how** to guard our hearts in verse 24-27. Three weeks ago, we noted from verse 24 that one way to guard our heart is to put away a “froward” (deceitful) mouth and perverse lips. Where does deceitful and perverse speech come from? Our sinful hearts. But it is also true that if we **use** deceitful and perverse speech, that will flow back **into** our heart and “poison” it, so to speak, so that more bad speech will come out.

The same is true with what we **look** at. Why do we look at things we shouldn't? Because we have a sinful heart. But it is also true that if we **choose** to look at things that we know we shouldn't, wrong thoughts that come as a result of what we look at will flow back into our heart and negatively affect it. That's why God tells us to be careful about what we look at in verse 25. This morning we are going to focus on this verse and consider these three questions. Question 1—**why** be careful about what we look at? Question 2—**how** does what we look at affect our heart? Question 3—**what** are things we can do to protect our eyes and keep them pointed in the right direction?

PRAY

1. Why be careful about what we look at?

The first answer is fairly obvious... A. Because of the command of God

We have the command right here in verse 25, don't we: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” “Right on” and “straight before” doesn't mean we never turn our heads or look from side to side. It means we head in the **right** direction—the direction that pleases God—**at all times** which includes avoiding and resisting temptations. Jesus shares a similar thought in **Matthew 6:22** “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” The idea here is our **focus** in life—not just what we look at. But what we look at is obviously included. We cannot have a single eye—a whole-hearted pursuit of God and His will—if we look at things which we know we shouldn't.

Jesus also says we should take drastic measures to remove things from our life that cause us to sin. Notice **Matthew 18:9** “And if thine **eye offend thee, pluck it out**, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” Does Jesus mean to pluck out your literal, physical eye?

No; but He does mean if your TV...or computer...or iPhone causes you to stumble, get rid of them! Why be careful about what we look at? Because God tells us to.

We also need to be careful about what we look at B. Because of the correlation between our eyes and our heart. God warns us of the truth that **what we see** affects our heart.

Look back at verses 20 & 21 “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**.” In other words, if we keep God’s Word in our ears and in front of our eyes, they will influence our hearts. Here are a few more verses that show that:

Psalms 73:3 “For I **was envious** at the foolish, **when I saw** the prosperity of the wicked.” Envy—a heart issue—occurred because he “**saw** the prosperity of the wicked.”

Please turn to Proverbs 6:24-25. In verse 25, we again see the correlation between the eye and the heart.

The way to avoid **lust** in the heart for a seductive woman is to not be captivated by her beauty with your **eyes**. Lastly, notice the words of Jeremiah in **Lamentations 3:51** “**Mine eye affecteth mine heart** because of all the daughters of my city.” The context here is that his heart was broken as he saw the women of Jerusalem being marched out of the city as captives. His eye—what he saw—unquestionably affected his heart.

I want to pause here for just a moment. I wonder how many of us—especially men—under-estimate how much our eyes affect our heart. We naively think **other men** are negatively affected if they look at the wrong things, but it doesn’t affect **us** because we are supposedly “stronger.” What a foolish way to think! We are reminded in Proverbs 16:18 that “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

Why should we be careful about what we look at? Because God commands us to be careful and because what we look at affects our heart. Next, let’s consider...

2. How does what we look at affect our heart?

Looking at things affects our heart because of the **progressive nature of sin**. What do I mean by that? We are going to look at just a few examples of the many that are in God’s Word. Let’s turn to Proverbs 23:31.

--What is harmful and wrong about looking at red wine in a cup? Absolutely nothing—if it wasn’t for how sin operates in our hearts!

--v 32 When does wine “bite like a serpent” and “sting like an adder”? When it is merely sitting in a cup? *No; it must be drunk first!*

--v 33 Does a man’s eyes “behold strange women”—and does his mouth utter perverse things—just because he **looks** at a cup of wine? *No; he must drink it first!* (By the way, “strange” does not mean “weird,” it means someone who is not his wife).

--That is what I mean by the progressive nature of sin—one thing leads to another, but it all started with what? *A look!* And because of the progressive nature of sin, the best way to avoid sin is to “nip it in the bud,” so to speak, and that is at the beginning of the process—the look—and not after the process has begun!

Here’s another example:

A. The sin of Achan (Josh 7:20-21)

In the way of background, please turn to Joshua 6. In verses 1-5, we see God’s instructions to Joshua. What were the instructions? March around the city once per day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day. After marching seven times on the seventh day, blow the trumpet—then shout—and down will come the city walls!

That wasn’t the only instructions given, however. Notice Josh 6:17-19. They were also told that any gold or silver they found while capturing the city would be dedicated to the Lord and not kept for themselves.

Now notice Joshua 7:1. How did that happen? Why did Achan do what he did?

Because of the progressive nature of sin! Notice Joshua 7:20-21.

--v 21 “When I saw among the spoils....a garment...silver....and gold...then I coveted them [I desired them], and took them...” It all started with a look though, didn’t it? Was he the **only** one who saw garments and gold and silver? No, but instead of telling himself they were not his because they belonged to the Lord, he probably began to think about how great it would be to have them for himself.

B. The sin of David

A similar thing happened to David, didn't it? We aren't going to turn there, but notice on your sheet:

II Samuel 11:2-3 "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof **he saw a woman** washing herself; and the woman was very **beautiful to look** upon. ³And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the **wife** of Uriah the Hittite?"

I don't think I'm going out on a limb to suggest that David did not just see her bathing, then quickly turn away. He looked...and saw her beauty...and lingered in his look...and longed for her, then asked about her. He undoubtedly committed adultery with her in his heart, but he could've prevented **physical** adultery—and the murder of Bathsheba's faithful husband—if he had not sent for her after learning she was another man's wife! Oh, the progressive and destructive nature of sin!

Why be careful about what we look at? Because God commands us to be careful and because what we look at affects our heart. **How** does what we look at affect our heart? Because of the progressive nature of sin that starts with a look, but often leads to lust and sin.

Lastly, let's consider....**3. What are things we can do to protect our eyes?**

What are some things we can practice or habits that we can develop that will assist us in protecting our heart through what some refer to as the "eye-gate?"

Before giving you four practical suggestions, I want to repeat a **disclaimer** I made a few weeks ago: these methods or steps will not work if you don't have a **new heart**. If you are **not** born again—if you are **not** a child of God—you will not have the **desire** to change, nor the **power** to do so because your sin-nature is stronger than your will-power!

So in addition to having a new heart...and deciding you want to be careful about what you look at...and asking God to help you in this area, here are four practical suggestions:

A. Make a covenant with your eyes

Notice **Psalm 101:3** "I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes..."

Is that a good thing to do—make a conscious decision to not "set" anything wicked before your eyes? It is, isn't it? What is interesting, though, is that **David**—the man who stole another man's wife—**wrote** these words! Did he fail to follow-through on his decision to not set anything wicked before his eyes—or is there more to it than that?

Consider this: was Bathsheba **wicked** for taking a bath on her roof-top? No; that is probably the only place she could! The problem was that the roof of king David's house was higher than any of the other roof-tops so he could look down onto her roof and see her. There **are** evil, wicked women that sell pictures of themselves—or "rent" themselves out—but Bathsheba was not one of them!

The issue was not that David didn't **keep** his covenant—the issue was that his covenant didn't go **far enough**! It didn't account for the fact that we can be tempted with things that aren't in and of themselves wicked. Sometimes we can't **help** what we see—but we certainly can **decide** what we are going to do after we see them! That's why I believe Job's covenant was better. **Job 31:1** "I made a **covenant** with mine **eyes**; why then should I **think** upon a maid?" In essence, Job was saying this: 'I've made a promise to myself—a resolution—that I'm not going to **think** about having someone or something that I see that is not mine.'

Maybe some illustrations will help. Men, suppose you are driving down the freeway toward the Dells and see billboards for "adult" stores. You have one of two options: look away and not think about it—or look as long as you safely can, then think about it. If you've made a promise to yourself regarding your eyes, you will quickly turn away. The same holds true for how we handle magazine covers at grocery stores...or commercials on television...or inappropriately dressed women you may see even at a gas station.

This resolution can also help in other areas of temptation. I work at the armory in Mauston that is currently having some “remodeling” work being done. Because of that, I had to switch offices and right outside the office I now work there are candy bars for sale—and money just lying in an open box! I walk by that money probably 6 times a day. I know it is there, but really don’t think about it. Why? Because I have made a resolution not to take long looks at something that is not mine.

Without those kinds of safe-guards, though, I could easily end up like Achan. I could stand there and look at the box and try to count the money with my eyes. Then I could say to myself, ‘This box is a mess—the money is all over the place and really should be straightened out.’ So I pick up the money...and sort it into piles of like bills...and add up how much it is...and began to think about what I could buy with it. Then I could think about the fact that no one is around...and no one knows how much is there...and that I could probably take some and get away with it...That’s what happened to Achan...and David...and can happen to us if we look too long at something that is not ours.

B. Cooperation with a loved one

I won’t spend a lot of time on this one because a number of you live alone, but here is what I mean by “cooperation.” My wife likes to watch a news show called “Inside Edition.” Sometimes I watch it, sometimes I don’t. Just this week she was watching it and while I was adding wood to the fireplace she said, “Don’t look; don’t look!” Why did she say that? She was warning me that an inappropriately dressed woman was 3 feet to my right on our television screen and knew I did not want to see that!

C. Contentment with what we have (Heb 13:5)

Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Many of us are familiar with the last part of that verse and it is a great encouragement to us “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

I wonder, though, if too often times we forget the first part of the verse: “be **content** with such things as we have!” Being content with what we have will help guard us from looking too long at something that belongs to someone else.

D. Conscious awareness that God is with us—always!

Is there **anywhere** we can go that God won’t be **with** us? There isn’t, is there? Everywhere we go, God is there! David reminds us of that truth in **Psalms 139:7-11** “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.”

We know this in our **head**, but do we consider it often enough in our daily living? Was Achan thinking about God’s watchful eye when he was looking at the Babylonian garment...and silver...and gold? Was David thinking about God being there with him as he was gazing down at Bathsheba?

How about you and me? Do we think often enough about the fact that God is with us **all the time**, that He knows what we see...and how **long** we look at it...and **why** we look at it? I know that when I am alone in the armory—and it is just me and the money—that I am not **really** alone because God is there. I know that when I am on my computer—alone in my den—that I am not **really** alone, God is right there with me. What a blessed safe-guard—and motivator—to know that God is with us everywhere—and at all times!

What are some things we can do to point our eyes in the right direction—and thus guard our heart?

- 1) Make a covenant—a resolution—with our eyes.
- 2) Have cooperation—accountability and assistance—from a loved one.
- 3) Be content with what you have.
- 4) Be conscious of God be always with you.

After a message like this, some of you might be thinking, “Hmm; is there someone in our church that Pastor knows is dealing with this issue?” The answer is “No—at least not that I’m aware of!”

So why preach a message like this?

--First, I mentioned in the introduction that I believe verses 24-27 tell us how to guard our hearts.

--Second, is it not true that “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure?” I would most certainly rather prevent these things from happening in your life—and mine—than have to try to “cure” it after the fact. I’m sure in hind-sight, Achan and David would feel the same way!

--Third, these practical yet Biblical steps are good for each of us to know in order to help others, including our children and grandchildren

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS/QUESTIONS

1. First and foremost, are you saved? God knows everything you have **ever** looked at...and how long you looked at it...and why you looked at it...and what you’ve done after looking at it. God knows what you’ve done in the dark—and when you thought no one else was looking. And you will be judged for the things that you have done that are sinful. There are things that you have done that you **know** about—and there are things you have done that you have **forgotten** about. Revelation 20:12 reminds us “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

The only way you will escape that judgement is to have the penalty for your sins paid for—and nothing you **can do** is enough. That is why we need to trust Jesus as our Savior and Substitute. Have you done that?

2. Child of God, how careful are you about what you look at? Have you made a covenant with your eyes? If not, I would encourage you to do so. Are you content with what you have? Do you remind yourself often that God is always with you? If not, start today!

I like what Barnes says about this verse and have the quote there on your outline:

Barnes: "It was not merely his intention to lead a chaste life, and to avoid open sin, but it was to **maintain a pure heart**, and not to suffer the mind to become corrupted by dwelling on impure images, or indulging in unholy desires."

Barnes on Job 31:1

"Why then should I think upon a maid - Upon a virgin - על-בתולה 'al-bethûlâh; compare [Proverbs 6:25](#), "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids;" see, also, the fearful and solemn declaration of the Saviour in [Matthew 5:28](#). There is much emphasis in the expression used here by Job. He does not merely say that he had not thought in that manner, but that the thing was morally impossible that he should have done it. Any charge of that kind, or any suspicion of it, he would repel with indignation. His purpose to lead a pure life, and to keep a pure heart, had been so settled, that it was impossible that he could have offended in that respect. His purpose, also, not to think on this subject, showed the extent of the restriction imposed on himself. **It was not merely his intention to lead a chaste life, and to avoid open sin, but it was to maintain a pure heart, and not to suffer the mind to become corrupted by dwelling on impure images, or indulging in unholy desires.** This strongly shows Job's piety and purity of heart, and is a beautiful illustration of patriarchal religion. We may remark here, that if a man wishes to maintain purity of life, he must make just such a covenant as this with himself - one so sacred, so solemn, so firm, that he will not suffer his mind for a moment to harbor an improper thought. "The very passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;" and the outbreaking crimes of life are just the result of allowing the imagination to dwell on impure images. As the eye is the great source of danger (compare [Matthew 5:28](#); [2 Peter 2:14](#)), there should be a solemn purpose that that should be pure, and that any sacrifice should be made rather than allow indulgence to a wanton gaze: compare [Mark 9:47](#). **No man was ever too much guarded on this subject; no one ever yet made too solemn a covenant with his eyes, and with his whole soul to be chaste.**"