

**Subject: *Protecting Your Heart***

**Scripture: *Proverbs 4:23***

We are constantly reminded to eat healthy and exercise to keep our heart healthy. The word “heart” is found 955 times in the Bible, and most of the time it refers to the inner person. The outer man (physical body) is merely dust. The inner person is the most valuable, and we protect valuable things. In the inner person we are made in the image and likeness of God. In our text the heart refers to the source of our thoughts, decisions, and emotions. This verse says out of the heart are the issues of life. The heart is the control center of everything in your life, the source of your attitudes, affections, and actions.

***Matthew 15:19*** For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

***Matthew 12:34-35*** <sup>34</sup> O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. <sup>35</sup> A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

The heart is the source of your words. Our words come out of our heart. What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket. When Isaiah saw the vision of God in heaven he said, ***Isaiah 6:5*** *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.* Isaiah confessed that he had a heart problem. His unclean lips were only the symptom of an unclean heart.

There is an interesting story about Simon the sorcerer. He apparently believed in Christ, but soon proved to be an unbeliever. ***Acts 8:18-23*** <sup>18</sup> And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup> Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. <sup>20</sup> But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. <sup>21</sup> Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. <sup>22</sup> Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. <sup>23</sup> For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Simon’s words revealed that his heart was not right and he was still a lost man.

Years ago a Michelin tire commercial showed a little baby sitting inside a tire and the sales pitch was, "Because so much is riding on your tires." The Book of Proverbs reminds us that so much is riding on your heart. Proverbs tells us that the heart is the center of wisdom, 2:10; trust, 3:5; perversion, 6:14; wicked imaginations, 6:18; lust, 6:25; craftiness, 7:10; understanding, 8:5; deceit, 12:20; folly, 12:23; heaviness, 12:25; bitterness, 14:10; sorrow, 14:13; backsliding, 14:14; joy 15:13; knowledge, 15:14; pride; 16:5; worry, 19:3; and envy, 23:17. The Bible speaks of an evil heart, a good heart, a clean heart, a hard heart, an understanding heart, a tender heart, a merry heart, a sad heart, a fearful heart, a fixed (focused) heart, a deceitful heart, a wise heart, a stony heart, a new heart, a broken heart, and a pure heart. It speaks of troubled hearts, failing hearts, and seeking hearts.

Most people are usually concerned with their outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Only God knows the true condition of our heart. ***Jeremiah 17:9-10*** <sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? <sup>10</sup> I the LORD

*search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

God is the true heart specialist and He has given His Word to diagnose the heart and show us our true condition. **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

It is critical that we protect our heart and make sure it is in good condition before God. The rest of this message is going to be a heart exam to make sure everything is in good order.

### **1. A healthy heart is committed to God and His will**

**Proverbs 3:5-6** *Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

**2 Chronicles 16:9a** *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.* A “perfect” heart is one that holds nothing back from God. The Hebrew word is *shalem*, which means complete, full, or whole. The first and great commandment is to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

### **2. A healthy heart is focused on God and good things**

The word “heart” is found first in **Genesis 6:5** *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* There was a constant focus on evil instead of good.

**Psalms 19:14** *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.*

**Psalm 86:11** *Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.*

**Romans 8:6-7** <sup>6</sup> *For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* <sup>7</sup> *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

**Colossians 3:2** *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

### **3. A healthy heart is broken over sin**

**Psalms 51:17** *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Our hearts should break over the things that break God’s heart.

Puritan Richard Sibbes: “The greatest and hardest work of a Christian is the well ordering of his heart, which is unseen. A good Christian begins his repentance where his sin begins, in his thoughts.”

All sin grows from a root of pride. Unconfessed in eventually produces a hard heart, but when we confess our sins it reverses that process. Instead of hardness, there must be brokenness of heart, a shattering of our ego and a crushing of our pride. The hard soil of our hearts must be broken up like the fallow ground. God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble.

#### **4. A healthy heart is filled with God's Word**

*Psalms 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

*Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

#### **5. A healthy heart is full of joy**

*Proverbs 17:22 A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones. Proverbs 15:13 A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken. Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*

The Bible says the joy of the Lord is your strength. Our heart affects the way we look—our face, our smile, and how we appear to others. You can look at a person and tell if they're mad, sad, or glad. Our face is an indication of our heart. Why do most people smile for a family picture? It's because they are happy or at least they want to appear happy in the picture. But have you ever noticed the way suspects look after they're arrested and have a mug shot taken?

#### **6. A healthy heart is a clean heart**

Everything else about our heart is something that we are responsible for, but this is something only God can do.

*Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*

*Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.*

This is the same word (Heb., *bara*) found in Genesis 1:1, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

God purifies our hearts by faith. *Acts 15:7-9 (NKJV) And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*

When we place our faith in Jesus Christ He makes our heart pure. *Romans 10:9-10 If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

If you have a heart problem, you need a heart specialist. God is the only one who can give you a new heart, a pure heart, a tender heart, a teachable heart. Only God can change the heart and cleanse the heart.

Protect your heart so that it will be: 1) committed to God and His will; 2) focused on God and good things; 3) broken over sin; 4) filled with God's Word; 5) full of joy; and 6) it will be a clean heart through salvation and ongoing confession and cleansing.