

## **"GUARD YOUR HEART" SERIES**

### **#2: "God Knows Our Hearts"**

#### **INTRO:**

Proverbs 4:23 is the theme verse for this series:

***"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."*** That's the New International Version. The English Standard Version has it: ***"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."***

Last week I talked to you about what the biblical heart is, and three reasons God wants us to make guarding our heart a priority. The biblical heart is who we really are. Rather than the organ in the upper left side of our chest, it is the seat of and the function of reason, including everything we ascribe to the brain: power of perception, reason, understanding, insight, consciousness, memory, knowledge, reflection, judgment, and discernment. So, God wants us to make the guarding of our heart a priority because:

1. It's the most important, most valuable thing you have;
2. God wants us to give it to Him; and
3. Satan wants it.

It seems to me that if we're going to guard our hearts, it would help to know that *God knows our hearts*. So, I'd like us to take a look at some Scripture passages that affirm that.

First, let's look at...

#### **...1<sup>ST</sup> SAMUEL 16:7**

***"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or on the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"***

The Lord had just told Samuel to fill his horn with oil and get ready to anoint a new king over Israel. Saul had been rejected, and one of the sons of Jesse would be the new king. When Samuel saw Jesse's son Eliab, he assumed that he was to be the Lord's anointed, because he was such a fine specimen of a man, but the Lord said, "No,

he's not the one." Then He explained to Samuel that He made His choice based on *heart* not *handsomeness*.

What should we learn from this?

- *We should learn that the inner heart and the outward appearance are often not necessarily connected.*

In this case, Eliab appeared to Samuel to be a good choice for leading Israel. We probably would have thought Samuel to be a wise chooser of a leader for Israel. However, He turned out not to be so wise. Eliab's outward appearance did not accurately reveal his heart. It wasn't that he was a bad man; he just didn't have the "heart" of the leader God was looking for.

I can remember a number of times when I thought people appeared to be suited and well-qualified for areas of service or leadership in the church, only to find out that their hearts weren't right for the job. For example, successful businessmen are often selected as church leaders, but I've found over the years that some of them have the heart for it and some of them don't. Just because they were successful businessmen wasn't a good reason to put them in positions of leadership in the church.

I remember one man and his beautiful family who joined the church in Round Rock. He was a gifted teacher and speaker. His wife was a lovely lady. His children were exemplary. His daughter wanted to be a missionary. After a couple of years, he was recommended for the eldership. He accepted and was approved. He stood before the congregation and committed himself to serve the lord and the people of Community Christian Church. In less than two years, he called me one day and asked to meet with me. We met, and he told me that he needed to resign "for business reasons." He assured me that it didn't involve any "moral" reason or a woman. I took him at his word. In a few weeks, it became known that he had left his wife and family to live with a lady from his office. The whole church was stunned. I felt betrayed. He had not guarded his heart. We had not known his heart.

Second, let's look at...

### **1<sup>ST</sup> CHRONICLES 28:9**

***"And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for***

***the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought..."***

These words were spoken by David to his son Solomon after he had revealed to the people that God was not going to allow him to build the temple because he was "**a warrior**" who had "**shed blood**" (v. 3). He went on to tell Solomon that the Lord had chosen him to build His sanctuary.

What can we learn here?

- *I think we can see the value God places on the motive behind all that we think or do.*

God isn't the "bottom line" person that many of us are. He isn't concerned only about results. He wants us to acknowledge Who He is, and He wants us to give Him our hearts. He values our motives for what we think and do, so He searches our hearts. As we learned from the 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 16 passage, He is able to discern what is behind our every thought and action.

This is why Jesus was so critical of the Scribes, Pharisees, and the other Jewish leaders of His day: they saw obedience only in terms of the outward; their motives were wrong, and the Lord knew it. God is concerned, not only that we "do the right thing," but that we do it with the right motivation.

The world, by and large, is interested only in the outward result – the ends justifies the means – but God values motives. For example, your presence here today is something God values, but He is far more concerned with *why* you are here and what you do when you get here. Now, I recognize that sometimes it's better to do the right thing with a wrong motive than to do the wrong thing. In other words, it's the right thing for you to be here today, even if you came for the wrong reason. It's better than not being here. The goal, however, is to have our heart attuned to the Lord and to have our actions in sync.

Third,

**1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS 8:39**

***"...then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each whose heart you know, according to***

***all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind)."***

These are just a few words from Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the newly finished Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. His prayer begins in verse 22 and concludes in verse 53. In it he largely prays for God to use the temple as a focal point to answer the people's prayers and to forgive them when they sin and seek His forgiveness. He seems to be asking God to judge them not just by their *actions* but by their *intentions*.

What can we learn here?

- *I believe we can learn that God's judgment is fair and just because He knows our hearts, not just what we in our human weakness do and don't do.*

When we make judgments, we have only the outward and overt to base those judgments on. We can only go by appearances. Even if we allow our "gut feelings" to influence our judgments, it all boils down to what we know as fact. Sometimes "the facts" don't reveal a person's heart. So, our judgments aren't always fair and just. There isn't much we can do about that. We can only do our best with what we've got.

But God, who makes judgments of eternal significance, knows each person's heart and is able to make a perfectly fair, just, and merciful judgment. And, boy, am I glad of that! How about you?

How many times have you "messed up" in some way and wound up doing exactly the opposite of what you know God wanted you to do, even though your "heart" was in the right place, so to speak? Don't you find some comfort in knowing that God knows your heart?

Fourth,

#### **PSALM 139:23-24**

***"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting!"***

David wrote these words. He prays to God that He would use His divine power to know his heart *and to reveal to him that of which he needs to repent and seek forgiveness.*

What can we learn here?

- *We should learn that we need God, who knows our hearts and our thoughts, to reveal our sinfulness to us; we need to ask Him to do it.*

We are often unaware of our own sinful ways of thinking and behaving. We have blind spots. We don't even know our own hearts sometimes. We often see only what we want to see. James says that we're sometimes like the man who looks in the mirror and then **"goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like"** (1:24). Even our closest friends often aren't aware of what is in our hearts. We need to pray as David did, and ask God to search our hearts, reveal our shortcomings, and show us the right way.

How does God let us know where we fall short or where we miss the mark? Sometimes He uses our friends; sometimes those who we barely know. He will try to use your spouse. But sometimes He uses circumstances or that "still small voice."

Finally,

### **LUKE 16:15**

...where Jesus said to the Pharisees, **"You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."**

Jesus had just told his disciples the parable of the shrewd but dishonest manager who reduced the bills of those who owed his master so that they would be his friends. The Pharisees, who were listening, sneered at the teaching, so Jesus exposed them.

Now, what do we learn from this passage?

- *First of all, we, just like the Pharisees, tend to seek to justify ourselves in the eyes of others, rather than seeking God's approval.*

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:12 Paul spoke about Christians who **"measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another,"** saying, **"they are without understanding."** He goes on to say in verse 18: **"For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends."**

Again, in Galatians 6:4, while exhorting the strong to help the sinful weak, he wrote to the strong, **"But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor."**

While it isn't likely to happen, we could select the "Outstanding Christian of the Year" from among our members, but, since only God knows our hearts, that "Outstanding Christian of the Year" might not even make God's top one million list! It just means that there are about 35 people who think you're a better Christian than they are. Whoopee!

- *Second, we learn that what the world sees as just hunky dory, God may see as a detestable abomination.*

We live in a society that has come to not only *accept* wrong and immoral thinking and behavior but has come to making it *the norm* and to "cancelling" those who won't go along or who think differently.

## **IN CLOSING:**

Let me recap:

1. Our outward appearances do not always accurately reveal our hearts.
2. God places as much value on our motives as He does on what we think and do.
3. Since God knows our hearts, His judgments are always fair, just, and merciful.
4. We need God, who knows our hearts and our thoughts, to reveal our "heart trouble" to us.
5. Like the Pharisees, we tend to seek the approval of others rather than that of God.

6. In many instances, what the world accepts and promotes is an abomination to God.

I leave you with these words from Paul's letter to the Christians at Colossae:

***"If then, you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (3:1-3).***