

Theme: The key to godly character is carefully guarding our hearts because the state of the heart determines character.

I. Intro – Importance of Character/Virtue

- A. Much of Proverbs 10-31 deals with character
- B. Wisdom leads to virtue/character in action
- C. This is part of our focal point – *reliable* men
- D. We will be looking at some key character traits
- E. Today: Prelude –shaping heart/soul for character

II. The Most Important Message

- A. The introduction – important words
 - 1. Father is still instructing the son (v20)
 - 2. The words are very important (vv21)
 - 3. Must pursue – don't let them walk away (v21)
 - 4. The words have great benefit (vv 22)
- B. The goal – proper actions (vv24-27)
 - 1. Note litany of body parts (vv24-27)
 - 2. Actions of son in view – proper actions
 - 3. This shows son has proper character – wise
- C. The key – the health of the heart (v23)

- 1. Above all else (NIV); with all vigilance (ESV)
- 2. Guard your heart – watchmen on the walls
 - a. Control what heart imports
 - b. Control what your heart exports
- 3. For it is wellspring of life (v23)
 - a. Analogy of wellspring – affects all else
 - b. NLT – determines the course of your life

III. The Biblical Focus On the Heart

- A. Jesus stressed the importance of the heart
 - 1. Lk 6:43-45 – tree determines fruit; heart life
 - 2. Mark 7:20-23 – heart makes unclean
- B. Great promise – heart transplant (Ezek 36:25-27)
 - 1. v25 – idols; God will cleanse; not self-effort
 - 2. v26 – new heart & spirit; heart of flesh
 - 3. v27 – Spirit indwells to help us obey

IV. Applying the Word

- A. Do you see the heart is the key to character?
 - 1. It is a spring – determines purity downstream

2. Augustine – virtue is proper/ordinate love (City of God, 15.22)
3. CS Lewis – Men Without Chests (quotes)

B. What is the state of my heart?

1. Do I check my heart before Christ?
2. Do I know my flawed actions flow from within?
3. A word to the young – guard your heart!

C. What is shaping my heart and soul?

1. Do I guard my heart – control what it exports?
2. Do I guard my heart – control what it imports?

D. Hearts changed and renewed – by the Gospel

1. We are Gospel centered – not moralists!
2. Change comes from the Gospel
3. Change comes from Christ through means of grace
4. Communion

The Heart of the Wise - Shaping Our Soul for
Character

Proverbs 4:20-23

November 5, 2006

Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.
Proverbs 4:21 (ESV)

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
Proverbs 4:23 (ESV)

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.
Proverbs 4:23 (NLT)

He went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" Mark 7:20-23

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. Lk 6:43-45

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. Ezekiel 36:25

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 36:26

And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Ezekiel 36:27

It still remains true that no justification of virtue will enable a man to be virtuous. Without the aid of trained emotions the intellect is powerless against the animal emotions. I had sooner play cards against a man who was quite skeptical about ethics, but bred to believe that 'a gentleman does not cheat,' than against an irreproachable moral philosopher who had been brought up among sharpers." Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, p. 35.

"And all the time—such is the tragi-comedy of our situation—we continue to clamour for those very qualities we are rendering impossible. You can hardly open a periodical without coming across the statement that what our civilization needs is more 'drive', or dynamism, or self-sacrifice, or 'creativity'. In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful." Lewis, *Abolition*, pg 36-37.