



The Value of the Heart

- First, the heart is extremely valuable.
 - Proverbs 4:23 - "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life"
 - Matthew 16:26 - "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"
- Your heart is the most valuable thing that you have.

The Danger of a Hard Heart

- Hebrews 3:12-13 - "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."
- If left unchecked, our hearts can become calloused and potentially prove that we were never regenerated to begin with.
- Our hearts are prone to wander.
 - We all have woken up one day and wondered why we stopped praying, or wondered why we stopped reading our bibles. It is because we have not taken care to watch our hearts.
- We need each other
 - Mutual watchfulness in the church is a vital and necessary component to our walks with the Lord.

What are some helpful truths we can exhort one another with?

- "One of the primary preventions of hard-heartedness is the fear of the Lord." – Brian Hedges
 - Proverbs 28:14 - "Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity."
 - 2 Corinthians 7:1 - "Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God."

How does that fear of God help us in watchfulness and help soften our hearts?

- There flows from this godly fear, watchfulness... It makes them watch their hearts, and take heed to them with all diligence, let them should, by one or another of its flights, lead them to do that which in itself is wicked. It makes them watch, lest some temptation from hell should enter into their heart to the destroying of them. It makes them watch their mouths, and keep them also... that they offend not their tongue... it makes them watch over their ways, look well to their goings, and to make straight steps for their feet. Thus, this godly fear puts the soul upon its watch, lest from the heart within, or from the devil without, or from the world, or some other temptation, something should surprise and overtake the child of God to defile him, or to cause him to defile the ways of God, and so often the saints, open the mouths of men, and cause the enemy to speak reproachfully of religion... This grace of



fear is the softest and most tender of God's honor of any other grace. It is that tender, sensible, and trembling grace, that keepeth the soul upon its continual watch. – John Bunyan

- Reverential fear of the Lord is one helpful tool to soften hard hearts.

The Danger of Temptation

- We lack a sense of danger.
 - "A realistic perspective on sin" wrote Hedges, "that recognizes sin as rebellion against God's authority, transgression against God's law, and a death knell to life, joy, and peace, will not treat temptation lightly."
- We lack a sense of helplessness
 - Luke 22:31-32 - "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." The only reason that Peter's faith will remain secure is because Jesus prayed for Peter.
 - We can easily take pride in our zeal and our efforts, and perhaps the Lord might allow us to stumble so that we might be humbled.
- We need prayerful trust in the promises of God.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:13 - "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."
 - What he is promising is that there is always a way of escape, and that He is faithful. Our source of strength is not from within, but from our heavenly Father.

Your Adversary, the Devil

- The devil wants to destroy you.
 - 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."
- The devil will tempt us and then accuse us.
 - "First he [Satan] seduces us with the fleeting pleasure of sin. When he succeeds, he tallies up our transgressions and roars in our consciences in the hellish attempt to drive us to despair." – Brian Hedges
 - Our lack of watchfulness leads us into seasons of discouragement and despair, where the devil and his servants accuse us with our own deeds..



The Assurance of Salvation

- Watchfulness fuels assurance.

“Are you in the depths and doubts, staggering and uncertain, not knowing what is your condition, nor whether you have any interest in the forgiveness that is of God? Are you tossed up and down between hopes and fears, and want peace, consolation and establishment? Why lie you upon your face? Get up; watch, pray, fast, meditate, offer violence to your lusts and corruption; fear not, startle not at their crying to be spared; press unto the throne of grace by prayer, supplications, importunities, restless requests—this is the way to take the kingdom of God. These are not peace, are not assurance, but they are part of the means God hath appointed for the attainment of them.” – John Owen

- Watchfulness itself is not assurance, but it is the means by which we can attain assurance.
 - 1 John 2:28-2 - “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.”

The Gradual Onset of Spiritual Decay

- In Revelation 3 we read these haunting words from Jesus to the church at Sardis: “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.”
 - The church of Sardis likely did not get to where they were overnight.

What are the causes of such spiritual decay?

- Neglect of simple and prescribed means of grace of prayer and the word.

“Bibles read without prayer, sermons heard without prayer, marriages contracted without prayer, journeys undertaken without prayer, residences chosen without prayer, friendships formed without prayer, the daily act of private prayer hurled over or gone through without heart—these are the kind of downward steps by which many a Christian descends to a condition of spiritual palsy [paralysis], or reaches the point where God allows him to have a tremendous fall... We may be very sure that men fall in private prayer long before they fall in public. They are backsliders on their knees long before they backslide openly in the eyes of the world.” – J.C. Ryle

- Apathy.
 - Jesus said to the church in Laodicea: “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”
- Secret sin.



- Psalm 32:3-4, “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.”

The Sweetness of Fellowship with Christ

“Watchfulness is focused not just on avoiding temptations and sins but against interrupting or disturbing the soul’s enjoyment of Christ. This, I confess, has sometimes been the missing element in my own watchfulness. My concern has too often been to merely keep my nose clean rather than to enjoy Christ. But this is not true watchfulness. IN fact, indifferent to enjoying Christ’s fellowship reveals an already wandering heart.” – Brian Hedges

- In our pursuit of watchfulness, we must not exchange the glory of God for the glory of our self-righteousness
 - Psalm 84 – “How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God... For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness
 - Psalm 16:11 - “You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”