



August 20, 2021

Of First Concern

"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." - Proverbs 4:23

Our first concern must be for our hearts. The heart is our point of contact with God's unlimited capacity to protect and provide, which flows to those who choose to keep their minds fixed on him. Remember Paul's words to the believers in Rome, when he said that the downward spiral of history began with humanity's choice not to retain God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28). This choice still leads downward today.

Deciding to fill our minds with God is how we keep our hearts. To listen to his Word and nourish our whole beings with it is not a nice thing we might do occasionally. Our very lives depend upon it. The psalmist gave us the prescription for life when he declared, "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Psalms 119:11 NASB). God speaks life-giving truth to us in his Word, which is living and active and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). We need to cultivate a readiness to listen.

When the prophet Samuel was a young boy, Eli the priest gave him unerring advice on listening for the voice of God. It is a simple but profound prayer: "Speak, LORD, for Your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9). When we get up out of bed in the morning, among our first thoughts should be this: Lord, speak to me. I'm listening. I want to hear your voice. This is not because it's a nice way to start the day, but because the only thing that can keep us straight is being full of God and full of his Word.

If you don't do something like this, you do not have the option of having a neutral mind. Your thoughts cannot be empty. As the old saying goes, nature abhors a vacuum. If you are not entertaining God's truth, you will be entertaining Satan's lies. This is what happened to each one living in the days of Noah when "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). Now contrast that with Jesus.

Reflect: *When Satan confronted Jesus, he did not pick him up and throw him off the pinnacle of the temple. Nor did he turn the stone into a loaf of bread and stuff it in Jesus' mouth. He did not have the power to do that. He had to appeal to Jesus and then wait for Jesus' response. What was that response? It was not, "Who do you think you are? Do you know who I am? I am the Son of God, you pip-squeak! Now scram!" No, Jesus responded with the Word of God. Rather than speak on his own behalf, he used the Scriptures to respond to Satan. He spoke them directly to him, using the authority of God's Word to defend himself against Satan's attempted deceptions.*

(Q) Where are you vulnerable? In what areas of your life are you easily thrown off balance by Satan lies about who you are, what God is like, and the world he has placed you in? How do you utilize the Scripture as a lamp that illuminates the truth about God's care and companionship in your circumstances?