

What Does Keeping the Heart Involve?

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Date: 06 April 2025

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. I want to start by thanking Jeremy for that excellent study that we've been on for the last several months on how to glorify God in the mundane, everyday things of life.

And it's really served to lift those things from being merely mundane, hasn't it? And it's transformed them into things that are to be sanctified the whole of life.

For to me to live is Christ. And to think about that, how does that apply to these areas that take up a lot of our life, just the routines of life and give an eternal significance to them.

So thank you, brother. And today we're starting a new series on John Flavel's book, Keeping the Heart. Some of you, if you've been here since the beginning, we studied this book 25, 35 years ago. Some of you weren't here, so we're going to study it again. And some of you don't remember what it said 35 years ago. So that's our new study. This book will be in the library.

[1 : 19] We do have a copy for the church once this series is done, but we're using it right now. John Flavel was an English Puritan, ordained as a minister in 1650.

Twelve years later, he was ejected from his church as a nonconformist, along with 2,000 other godly ministers who were unwilling to conform their worship to the Church of England prayer book that they were demanding, that you say these things in your worship.

You follow this liturgy. And they said, no, we're under Christ in these matters. So they were kicked out of the Church of England buildings that they had been ministering in.

Flavel continued to preach in other places, even in his house, to any that would hear him. Then, three years later, the Five Mile Act was passed.

This did not allow them to preach within five miles of their old church. So Flavel moved five miles away and continued to preach to any who came.

[2 : 32] I just heard yesterday that he sometimes would dress up like a lady to go out incognito and then preach to people, so they wouldn't recognize him.

Now, he wasn't a cross-dresser. He was seeking to preach the gospel, and I was amazed to hear that. This is those stiff English Puritans that we all read about.

Think about that, putting on a dress and going out to preach Christ. So desirous to see sinners come to the Savior. Eventually, under the reign of a different king, his religious freedoms were restored.

200 years later, Charles Spurgeon said, One page of the Puritan writings have more thinking, more learning, more scripture, and real teaching than what is found in whole books of the modern men of this day.

And I would say that Flavel's work fits that description. Chuck full of the scriptures. So keeping the heart is our study, and it's rooted in Proverbs 4, verse 23, if you'd like to turn there.

[3 : 36] Proverbs 4, verse 23. Some of you have it memorized. The King James Version was that which Flavel was working from. And it says there, Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Flavel breaks this verse into two parts. First, the exhortation.

Keep your heart with all diligence. Secondly, the reason for out of it, that is out of the heart, are the issues of life. So today we're at the exhortation.

Keep your heart with all diligence. And here he explains just what it is that we're to do. What does it mean to keep the heart, to guard it, to protect it?

Now the heart here is not that amazing muscle that pumps blood throughout your body to keep you alive. No, this is not that muscle.

[4 : 43] David cries out to God in worship how fearfully and wonderfully made we are. And that pump is indeed amazing. That it can go 70, 80, 90, even 100 years without needing a new valve job or an oil change.

It just keeps pumping. But inside that amazing body that God has made is an amazing thing called the soul or the heart. That is hard to define.

You can't see it. You can't operate on it. The heart. And when the scriptures in general speak of the heart, this is the soul, the spirit, the heart that includes the faculty of the mind as it thinks.

So Mary, when she heard what the shepherd said about her baby Jesus, she treasured these things and pondered them in her heart.

Her mind, the thoughts. So the mind includes the faculty of thinking. It also includes the faculty of the affections. We just talked about love.

[5 : 57] And we're to love God with all our heart. And so the heart is also the faculty of our desires, our affections. It's the faculty of our will, what we choose or refuse.

It includes the faculty of conscience that either accuses or defends us. So all these faculties are faculties of the heart, the soul.

Mind, affections, will, and conscience. So it's the control center of our entire being. The source, the fountain from which comes the issues of life.

That means everything you do or think has its origin in the heart. The NIV says, for it is the wellspring of life. That's a helpful picture, a spring.

And if the spring is polluted, the waters flowing from it will also be what? Polluted. What comes out is just what's inside.

[6 : 58] Remember what Jesus said in Luke 6, 45. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things. And an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things.

For out of the abundance of his heart, the mouth speaks. If hateful words come out, it's because there's hatred in the heart.

If proud looks and words come out, it's because there's pride in the heart. There's kindness in the heart. It will come out in kind words and deeds. So out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, the eye looks, the hands move, the feet walk, the will chooses, the affections, and all you do have their beginning here in the heart.

So if the heart is this wellspring of life out of which the whole of life comes, how important then is it that we guard that, that we keep it above all else?

So the heart is the noblest part of mankind because of the capacity within us. It is the capacity within us.

[8 : 13] It's made for a personal relationship with God. Why can we have a personal relationship with God who is spirit? Because we have this heart, this soul that was made for him and made for fellowship with him.

It's what John Bunyan called in his book, the holy war. He called it the palace that the king intends for himself alone and not another with him.

A castle, a palace. And so that's on the cover of this publication of the book. The heart is that central place and we need to guard the palace, guard the heart above all else.

So God created the heart to be inhabited by himself. But ever since Adam fell into sin, we're born in Adam's fallen image with a heart and mind that's not neutral.

Take God or leave him. Romans 8, 7 says that the natural man's mind is enmity against God. It's hostile toward God and will not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

[9 : 20] So that means that our mind and our affections are all disordered and are combined in rebellion against God. The heart is anti-God, not neutral, but anti-God against his law.

The will is stubborn and will not bow to his commands. And so with the natural man, as we come from the womb, the gates to the palace of our hearts are closed to God.

He is not welcomed here. We will not have him to be our king. We will do what we want to do. And until our heart is changed and opened by God, conversion is impossible.

Remember, we studied it recently in Mark chapter 9 when Jesus said it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. And the disciples said, well, Lord, who then can be saved?

And Jesus said, with man, this is what? Impossible. What's impossible? To be saved. Man left to himself has a closed heart to God and he cannot be saved until God opens our heart.

[10:36] And that's what Jesus says. With man, this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God. Mark 10, 25 and 26.

So God's not wanted in the sinner's heart. Its gates are closed and barred to keep him out. So this is why in Acts 16 and verse 14, it says of Lydia that when Paul was preaching the gospel of Christ, it says the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

The Lord opened her heart so that she responded to the message of the gospel. She didn't respond to the gospel by opening her own heart.

Rather, the Lord opened her heart so that she could respond to the gospel. That's the same reason Jesus told Nicodemus, that religious Pharisee in John chapter 3, I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you can never see or enter the kingdom of God.

You won't perceive it. You won't see it as the real thing it is. And you won't enter it. Unless what? Unless you have a new birth. You were born a sinner with the gate closed to him.

[11:50] You need to be born again by the Spirit of God if you are to ever enter the kingdom and be saved. So we come into the world as spiritual stillborns, with a soul that is dead in trespasses and sins, Ephesians 2.1.

It must be made alive again. It must be, you know, the paddles put on and brought to life. And that's what God does in the new birth, in the regeneration of the soul.

It makes it alive toward God, whereas before it was dead toward him. So all the faculties of the heart are so disordered by sin that we can never get to know, love, trust, obey God, unless in his great mercy he gives us a new birth.

1 Peter 1.3, Thanks be to God in his great mercy, he has given us a new birth into a living hope. Well, this new birth, this opening of the heart to receive Christ is described by Ezekiel in terms of a heart transplant in Ezekiel 36.26.

And I want you to notice as I read it that this is not something you do, it's something that is done to you by God. God is the speaker and he says, I will take out your heart of stone and I will put in a heart of flesh.

[13:16] So your heart is as hard as stone, unwilling to do my will. I'll make it a heart of flesh, pliable, willing to do my will.

Your self-dependence must be replaced with trusting God. Your self-love must be replaced with love for God. Your self-will replaced with submission to God.

Your self-seeking replaced with self-denial. And this is why only, what only God can do, and only when he does it, can we repent and trust in Christ to save us.

And so find a new life of peace with God and a loving, joyful, soul-satisfying relationship with God as he comes to take up his residence in the palace, the soul, the heart of a person.

So Flavel says, quote, the heart of man is his worst part before it is regenerate, and it is his best part afterwards.

[14:21] And God's the one that makes the difference. It's the worst place before the new birth because it's closed and hostile toward God. It's the best place afterwards because now it is open to God, and it's the place where God has come to dwell in the palace he made for himself.

Flavel says, the greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God. And the greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God.

Let me read that again. The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to this God because we don't like him and his loss. But the greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God.

Now, why is that if we get a new heart? Well, because our hearts are new and radically changed, they are not yet perfectly changed, are they? And every one of you know that because you still have evil thoughts and evil desires and sinful motivations.

So it's changed. The direction of our heart is now Godward. Yes, he now dwells in us, but there is also something else dwelling in that heart. What does Paul call it in Romans 7?

[15:49] Dwelling sin. Sin that lives within me. The flesh. Galatians 5, 17. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh.

They are in conflict with each other so that you do not do what you want. So there remains an enemy within. We studied that book as well. John Owen's work.

The enemy within. A traitor right within the palace walls called the flesh. And that flesh wars against the spirit. That flesh wants what the spirit doesn't want and it doesn't want what the spirit wants. And you who are believers know that conflict. It's like a tug of war. Sometimes it feels like we're in the midst of this tug of war. I want to do this, but I also have this appeal to that which is not good. And so Paul describes the struggle in Romans 7, 21. So I find this law or this principle, this power at work that when I want to do good, evil is present within me.

[17 : 05] It's always there. Always something to fight. And it's this that makes us vulnerable to sin's temptations, to Satan's lies, and to the world's allurements.

Because as long as we're in this world, we have this flesh within us that wants what the devil is offering and the world is offering. And that's why we're in this holy war as long as we're in the flesh, as long as we're in this world.

And that's why we must guard our hearts against the attacks of our threefold enemy, the world, the flesh, and the devil. So when Proverbs 4, 23 speaks of keeping the heart, guarding the heart, it presupposes that the heart's bent and inclination has already been changed.

Godward rather than stuck on self with God outside. It presupposes we've been born again. We are new creatures with new hearts, but we still struggle with the pull back to the world.

Someone has defined the flesh like a renter. Maybe some of you have rental properties and you've had renters that you wanted to evict and they wouldn't leave.

[18 : 23] That's the flesh. It's under new management. This heart belongs to God, but that old renter, the flesh, is not going to leave.

And it will only leave when we leave the body. So the battle, the battle rages, and now we've got to keep this heart. We've got to guard it.

Because if it's not been set right by God in the new birth, there's no way we can keep it right. Flavel says, keeping the heart with God after conversion is just as impossible as winning the heart to God before conversion.

We are as able to stop the sun in its course or make a river run backwards as by our own skill and power to rule and order our hearts. We may as well be our own saviors as our own keepers.

So yes, it is we who are told, keep the heart. That's your responsibility. That's your duty. The duty is ours, but the power is God's.

[19 : 32] Just like a branch, we must abide in the vine if we are to bear any good fruit. Left to ourselves, we're like that dead branch that we're all picking up after the storm and it has no life in itself.

But united to Christ, we can bear fruit. And so when the command comes, keep your heart, John, that's my job. I must guard it.

I must keep it. I must look to Christ and maintain that union and communing with Him so that His grace, the sap of His power might flow and enable me to do this, keeping of the heart.

For without me, Jesus says, you can do how much? Nothing. I've got that on my mirror at home because I don't always feel like that's the reality.

I always think, I've got some things I can do. No, He says, apart from me. Zero. Nothing but sin. That's all you can do, John.

[20 : 39] So, I've got to guard my heart and I've got to be walking with Christ in union and fellowship with Him that I might be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

So we take great care to maintain the heart, to keep it in good condition. Some of you are doing that for your physical heart. What are you doing for your spiritual heart?

We're to guard it from sin. We're to keep up this vital communion with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through diligent use of the means of grace, of the Word of God, prayer, worship, fellowship, like soldiers commanded to guard a castle from enemies, both without and traitors within.

And notice in this guarding and keeping of the heart, it's to be done with all diligence. And the Hebrew here is very emphatic and some of you know that one of the ways that the Hebrew emphasized something was to just say it twice.

And so, literally, the Hebrew says, keep, keep the heart. Keep, keep the heart. Keeping with all keeping the heart. Because if you don't, your heart will be gone.

[21 : 55] It'll be wandering off. Most dangerous to ignore our own hearts. So, the Puritans love to take a text and expound on it a while and then draw a doctrine from it.

A kind of bring it all together into one statement of faith. And so, that's what Flavel does. And the doctrine found in this verse, he says, is this. The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition of life is the great business of the Christian life.

The keeping, managing of our hearts is the great business of the Christian life. You wondered when you came in this morning, what's the great business? Flavel's saying, keeping your heart.

Because what is said of waters is also true of hearts. It's hard to keep them in bounds. Our new but imperfect hearts are like a stringed instrument.

Like a guitar, violin. Maybe in tune one day. But sin, a lack of watchfulness may cause it to get out of tune the next.

[23 : 03] Indeed, if you just take that instrument and lay it aside, that piano with the strings, just leave it alone for a while. Now, what happens? It gets out of tune. And you just leave your heart alone for a while.

And it will soon be out of tune. So, we'll need to be tuning the heart, guarding it continually. So, we're given six things involved in keeping the heart.

The first is frequent examination of the heart. What does it mean to keep the heart? Flavel says to start with, you need to examine it. You need to look at it. God is constantly looking at the heart and so must we.

Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks where? On the heart. So, if he's looking there, I better make sure I have an eye on it as well.

When's the last time you stopped and asked, okay, heart, where have you been for the last four hours? What'd you do? Where were you today? Were you in communion with your king?

[24 : 09] Were you mindful of pleasing him? Of doing all these routine things as unto the Lord? Were you looking to him? Were you leaning on him? Or were you forgetful of him? Were you drawn and attracted to the world?

Out of touch with God? Out of sight? Out of mind? If we're going to guard the heart, we've got to keep our eyes upon it. And if you know your heart has a tendency to stray, you better examine it often.

You've got a dog that is known to stray, you better keep an eye on it. It'll be gone. How much more valuable the heart? Checking in on it.

What have you been up to lately? Heart? If you knew you had a traitor in the bunch, you'd keep a wary eye on him, Flavel says. Well, we've got one, and we need to keep an eye on him.

So call your heart to account. He says it's especially helpful at the end of the day to ask, okay, where was my heart today? Just to have a few thoughts about that question.

[25 : 16] David says in Psalm 77, 6, I commune with my own heart, and my spirit makes a diligent search. So just as a wise businessman wants to know the condition of his bottom line on his books, and a good shepherd wants to know the condition of his sheep, so a wise Christian wants to know the condition of his or her heart.

Is it going forward? Is it going backwards? Is it keeping close to Jesus? Is it wandering further from him? Is it growing in love for him? Is our love hotter for him?

Or is it colder? What filled my mind today, stirred my affections, directed my choices? Well, we can do this as we read God's word and examine our hearts in the mirror of God's word.

That's what James says it is. It's a mirror in which we are to see what we are. I see here what God says I am to be. Well, let me look into that mirror that I might see.

Is there a reflection of it in my life? So, our memory verse next week is love is patient, love is kind, it does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

[26 : 39] So there it is. That's the mirror. Can you say, can I say, John is patient, John is kind, John does not envy, John does not boast, John is not proud.

That's what Flavel is talking about. We use the word as a mirror and we examine ourselves before it to just find out where our hearts are.

The devil, you know, self-examination was a big thing to the Puritans. It's almost a dirty word in many Christian circles today. Now, I know McShane, and I love him, said for every look you take of yourself, take ten of Jesus Christ, but he didn't say don't take any looks within.

But there's this exalting, supposedly, of grace that says you don't ever look within, you only look to Christ. That's the devil's playground. Oh, he loves that theology because an unguarded heart is the place where he makes hay.

That's where he does his work. So we need to be careful. There is that element within Christendom today that would turn self-examination into something wrong and horrible.

[27 : 59] It can become that. Sure, if you're always looking at yourself and not looking to Christ. But we need to frequently examine the heart to guard it.

2 Corinthians 13, 5 says, examine yourselves. And especially when coming to the Lord's Supper, we're told, let a person examine himself. Then, so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

1 Corinthians 11, 28. So keeping the heart with all diligence means we set a watch over the heart and examine it. Secondly, it means we are humbled for heart sins.

Humbled for heart sins. Not to watch the heart, not only to watch the heart, but to be humbled for disorders of the heart. 2 Chronicles 32, 26 says, King Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem.

So when we're examining ourselves, we're not just saying, well, did I steal someone's tools at work today? Did I kill someone?

[29 : 10] Did I lie? We're looking at the heart. Did I covet today? Where was my heart today? So it's heart sins that we're to be humbled for.

As we said, the greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our hearts. So if that's the greatest command, what's the greatest sin? Well, it's to not love him with all our hearts.

So we ought to be humbled for a lack of love for God. We shouldn't just be concerned about are all my ducks in a row outwards so that I look good to others.

It's rather, Lord, you see my heart and that's what I want to be right with you. No rival lovers in here. You, loving you with all my heart.

Remember the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, how it reveals his concern for sins of the heart. The Pharisees, they weren't about the heart at all, really, in many ways. They were all about the outward look.

[30 : 11] Remember? Well, I haven't stuck a knife in my brother's, my neighbor's back. What does Jesus say? Well, he first starts with the Beatitudes.

Beatitudes. What are Beatitudes? But attitudes of the heart that we are to be. So, lowly in heart. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn, have a grief in their heart. Blessed are those who are meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. You see, the peace-loving, the pure in heart.

These are heart issues. And that's where God defines the citizens of Christ's kingdom. The heart matters. And then he turns to the commands. And the Pharisees had turned them into something outward.

And if I haven't stuck a knife in my neighbor's back and haven't gone to bed with my neighbor's wife, then I'm good with the sixth commandment and good with the seventh commandment. And God says, no. Jesus says, no.

[31 : 15] You might have heard it said that way, but I say to you, if you're angry with your brother, you're in danger of the hellfire. And if you lust after a woman in your heart, you've broken the seventh commandment, committed adultery in the heart.

So, again, it's heart sins that were to be humbled for how Jesus took the Pharisees to task, calling them hypocrites. You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you're full of greed and self-indulgence.

First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean. Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites. You're like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside, but on the inside are full of dead man's bones and everything unclean.

In the same way, on the outside, you appear to people as righteous, but on the inside, you're full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Matthew 23, 25 to 28.

Again, Mark 7, 20, what comes out of a man is what's in him. And 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, anger, arrogance, and folly.

[32 : 37] All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean. And Jesus complains of the people of his day as Isaiah did of his day, that these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

So if biblical religion is anything, it is heart religion. And we learn that from our Savior. We learn it Old Testament, New Testament. So the healthy Christian is concerned with heart sins.

Humbled over pride, hatred, impatience, lust, anger, bitterness, coveting, discontent, ingratitude, unforgiving, unloving.

So we're not satisfied to merely look good to each other. Are you humbled at the fact that you love Jesus so little when he loves you so much?

That's a good sign. For being so proud when he is so humble and gentle in heart. For being so selfish when he became poor to make you rich.

[33 : 46] For being so impatient with him and others when he is so long-suffering with you. For irreverence in worship as if he was no big deal. For a cold heart for Christ when his is so warm toward us.

The church of Ephesus was doing a lot of good things. But Jesus says, I've got one bone to pick with you. You've forsaken your first love.

And that's what I want. My son, give me your heart. That's God's concern. It ought to be ours. So that's the second thing. Self-examination. Being humbled for heart sins.

Third, by instant confession of sin and prayers for a better condition of our heart. So what do we do when we examine ourselves and we see our heart is all out of order?

And we see our heart sins. What do we do? We're to instantly confess and to pray for a better condition of heart. Now, where's Flavel come up with that? Well, David finds his heart dirtied with lust, adultery, and murder.

[34 : 50] And he humbly confesses his sin to God in Psalm 51, doesn't he? And then he cries in his confession for a better condition of heart. Not only forgive me, but create in me a pure heart of God and renew a steadfast spirit in me.

So it's not just this idea, well, I come to confessional like a Roman Catholic. As long as I go to confessional and confess my sins, well, then I can go out and continue to walk in that lifestyle.

No, we confess our sins and then we ask for a better condition of heart. Wash and cleanse me.

Even as you promised to do for those who confess their sins, you're faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness.

So David cries out in confession and then also asks for a better condition. Other times he finds his heart divided and distracted. Maybe you can relate to that.

Your heart's here and there and everywhere. And David sensed that. It's being pulled away from God and scattered in a thousand different places.

[36 : 01] And he prays, give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name. An undivided heart. Unite my heart. Bring all these strands together to fear you, to walk before you.

I love that hymn of repentance that we sing. Maybe you'd like to even go over it before we worship today. It's number 418. But in it we say, we have not loved thee as we ought, nor cared that we are loved by thee.

Thy presence we have coldly sought and feebly long thy face to see. And then the prayer. We're confessing. And now the prayer for a better heart. Lord, give a pure and loving heart to feel and own the love thou art.

So confess the coldness of heart. Ask him to light the flame or never will our hearts be raised and warm to praise. Stephen Sharnock, another English Puritan, wrote, All sin is weariness of God.

Take that home and chew on it. That's a pretty humbling thing. All sin is weariness of God. I'm tired of God. Had enough of God. I'm going to go do my own thing for a while.

[37 : 19] You know, I wasn't weary when I was watching that ball game. But as soon as I go to pray, I get tired real fast.

Oh God, that's not right. I receive praise and my heart rises up with pride. God, that's not right. Give me a different attitude.

Give me a Christ-like response. Give me a heart hungering and thirsting for you. I'm not saying there's not a time to watch a ball game. I'm simply saying, why is it that we get weary of God?

Sharnock, I think, is on to something that that principle of sin, it's tired of God real quick. And if you listen to that, instead of preaching to it and saying, listen, weary heart, you need to get close to God and I'm not going to listen to you.

So we confess the weariness of our heart and ask him to revive our hearts. Will you not revive our hearts that your people might rejoice in you? Find our delight in him.

[38 : 23] Prone to wonder. Prone I feel it. Prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart. Oh, take and seal it. Seal it for your courts above.

Confessing my wondering heart. Praying that God would seal it and keep it for his courts above. So, with the promise like 1 John 1, 9, that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

As Flavel said, we should go immediately in confession. We shouldn't continue another day, another week, making ourselves better before we come and know right out of the pig pen to the Father.

I've sinned. I've sinned against you. Wash me and cleanse me. So, that's the third thing. You know, there's a dangerous time between being aware of our sin and when we confess it and ask for a better heart.

I've heard that described as the devil's gulch. So, I realize I've sinned and yet I don't get to Jesus and confess it and ask for forgiveness and a new heart.

[39 : 44] Oh, David had a better way of dealing with it when his heart was close to God. Psalm 119, 59 and 60.

I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. He found there were some things where he was going astray and he considered his ways and he turned my steps to your statutes.

I will hasten and not delay to obey your command. So, once we see, oh, search me, oh God, and try me and show me what you find that you might lead me in the path of everlasting life.

But right away, he says, I'll hurry. I'll hasten to turn. David wasn't always like that. His lust on the rooftop goes unconfessed.

His heart gets harder, not softer. Pretty soon, he's covering up his sin with a lie and that doesn't work so he covers up with a murder.

[40 : 49] You see, the period between our sin and our confession is a dangerous time. So, to delay is deadly. The heart doesn't get softer.

It gets harder the longer we stay away from Christ. Christ is the fire and we get close to him and our heart warms again. So, we want to get to him quickly to confess.

Nothing between my soul and the Savior. I want to live under the smile of his pleasure with a clear conscience. Oh, for a clean heart.

Oh, God. A heart to love you more and hate sin more. I hope that's your desire even today in coming to church to meet with God and to go home loving him more and hating sin more.

Well, I can only give you the headings, the other three headings, if you would keep the heart with all diligence. Avoid the occasions where the heart may be tempted to sin.

[41 : 51] There's a saying that says if you don't want to get burned, don't play with fire. That's the idea. Avoid the occasions where your heart may be tempted to sin. And then, fifthly, keep a constant, holy jealousy over your heart to keep from sinning.

A jealous eye, like a lover, jealous of the beloved. Be jealous to keep your heart pure.

A chaste virgin for our bridegroom, Jesus. And then, sixth, keep the heart with all diligence by realizing God's presence by setting the Lord always before us.

David says, I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. So I hear bad news.

He's right there. And I've got an awareness of his presence with me. Keeps me from sinful worry, sinful anxiety. I'm tempted like Joseph to lust.

[42 : 55] And right away, he sees the Lord. How can I sin and do this great evil against my Lord? The presence of God. Set the Lord. Realize his presence.

That's a way to keep the heart pure before him. Well, we'll look more fully. I have one more week before we pass off to Roger or Jeremy and we'll look at that further next week.

Let's pray, shall we? Lord, we thank you, Lord, for the light of your truth. It searches our hearts and oh, how our hearts need to be searched.

How often they go undetected until we fall into some more serious sin and then, oh, it's a sad way back.

We thank you that you are always willing and ready to receive us and that you urge us to confess our sins with the knowledge that you're not reluctant to forgive.

[43 : 54] You are more willing to forgive than we are to confess. So move our hearts to seek you. Move our hearts to love like you've loved us and then keep us from being ignorant of where our hearts are.

Make them full of fire, full of love for you. May this day even be used to that end, our fellowship with each other, our worship, our hearing of your word. We ask, Lord, you to have heart dealings with us and we with you.

In Jesus' name, amen.