

No Other Gods (4): Guard Your Heart

(Proverbs 4:23)

I. Introduction

- A. As we continue our series “*No Other Gods*,” let’s look at a disturbing story in **2 Sam. 13**
1. David’s oldest son and heir Amnon has become infatuated with his half-sister Tamar
 - a. His obsession has gotten to the point where he couldn’t eat or sleep (**2 Sam 13:2**)
 - b. Obviously, this isn’t anyone’s love language, but Amnon thinks he must have her
 - 1) Well, he is the king’s son; when you are the king’s son you have advisers
 - 2) Jonadab cooks up a scheme to get him alone with Tamar with David’s blessing
 - c. Of course, David and Tamar thinks that she is going there to care for a sick brother
 - d. But once Amnon and Tamar are alone together, he overpowers and rapes her
 2. We look today at “*gods of pleasure*.” Amnon serves as object lesson and a warning
 - a. **First**, when you focus on pleasure, you don’t focus on consequences (**2 Sam 13:13**)
 - 1) Tamar tried to get Amnon to see the consequences of his act— *for them both!*
 - a) Her reputation, her prospects— her life would be ruined... it was (**2 Sam 13:20**)
 - b) He would debase himself as a “wicked fools,” not the crown prince of Israel
 - 2) But in the heat of the moment, the heat of moment was all Amnon could see
 - b. **Second**, you also can’t see how empty the gods of pleasure leave you (**2 Sam 13:15**)
 - 1) His obsession with her didn’t last any longer that it took to complete the act
 - a) “*Hated her more than he had loved her*” How sad a postscript is that?
 - b) What he thought he couldn’t live without— in the end, he couldn’t live with!
 - 2) The very thing he thought would satisfy him left him totally empty and angry
 - 3) His selfish act set in motion a plan that took his life and destroyed his family
 - c. **Point:** Pick the wrong god, and they will always let you down in the end. Always.
- B. But doesn’t God want us to enjoy life? Of course, He does! He made life to be enjoyed.
1. Ecclesiastes can be pretty dreary at times, but it does have its moments (**Ecccl 3:12-13**)
 - a. Whole duty of man... that’s the prize, but it’s OK to enjoy the Cracker Jacks (**5:19**)
 - b. This is why navigating through the temptations of the gods of pleasure is difficult
 2. They take good gifts God created for us to enjoy and turn them sideways into idols
 - a. God made food taste good so we would enjoy it... NOT so it’d take over our life
 - b. God created sex for us to enjoy... NOT so we could pervert it in every way possible
 3. If we are to keep pleasure in its proper place, then we must keep a guard around it
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II. Guard Your Heart

- A. Declaration of Independence says we have an unalienable right to pursue happiness
1. If no one gets too badly hurt, we have the right to pursue pleasure any way we want
 - a. OK, my right to swing my fist ends where your nose begins... at least on paper
 - b. But then, if I like swinging my fist, maybe you need keep your nose out of my way!
 - c. Balancing rights and who gets to pursue pleasures—that can get pretty sticky, right?
 - 1) Lady last week demanded two dogs be removed from plane due to her allergies
 - 2) Southwest sided with the dogs' pursuit of happiness over hers— *she got booted*
 2. C. S. Lewis helps us look at morality in three parts, not just one— *ships in formation*
 - a. **First**, you can't have ships colliding into others (*that a fist hitting someone nose*)
 - 1) Morality does concerns not hurting; we pursue life without harming others
 - 2) And pleasure is just one of the things that we pursue without bringing harm
 - 3) This is the only part our culture focuses on, "*As long as I don't hurt anyone...*"
 - b. **Second**, you can't have ships that are not maintained internally and just fall apart
 - 1) When we lived in Memphis, a pick-up broke in half on I-240 and cause wreck
 - 2) It was so poorly maintained that it eventually caused harm to vehicles around it
 - 3) We can't say, "*What I do privately is my business...*" It eventually gets out
 - c. **Third**, the ships must answer to One who owns them and who set their course
 - 1) We're sailing out ships to a distant land, but these ships don't belong to us
 - 2) They belong to God and he has the right to tell us how they are to be sailed
- B. **Proverbs 4:23**- "*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it*"
1. **Above All Else.** We are to make guarding our heart a priority above everything
 - a. American Heart Association says 80 million of us (that 1-in 4) have heart disease
 - b. Some of you know too well what happens when you have heart attack or stroke.
 - 1) When Dad had by-pass surgery, everything suddenly became about his heart
 - 2) For the first time in his life, he ate right and exercised. "Above all else"
 - 3) When it's threatened, you realize that nothing is more important than heart
 - c. We forget that the same is true spiritually; our heart is what really matters.
 - 1) We stress what is seen—going to church, singing songs, praying prayers, etc.
 - 2) As long as things OK on the outside we tend to ignore what's on the inside.
 - 3) Spiritually speaking— we often tend to try to manage what going on outside

2. **Guard Your Heart.** As in “*post a guard*” ([Neh 4:9](#)) or “*take in custody*” ([Gen 40:4](#))
 - a. When your guard is up, that means that you aren’t passive. You’ve set up a defense.
 - b. One of the most guarded areas is Fort Knox, home of much of our gold reserve
 - 1) Gold is kept in two-story building made of 16,500 cubic feet of granite
 - a) It’s under 1400 tons of steel combined with 4200 cubic yards of concrete.
 - b) The vault door weighs 20 tons; no one person ever has the combination.
 - 2) Why go to all that trouble? Because what’s inside the vault is THAT valuable!
 - c. God says we’re put that kind of spiritual guard on our heart—because it’s valuable

3. **Everything Flows From It.** What we say or do comes from our heart ([Lk 6:45](#))
 - a. Your heart beats 100,000 times and pumps 2,000 gallons of blood every day.
 - b. In Hebrew culture, the heart was a metaphor for the center or core of a personality.
 - 1) The ancients knew you could lightly touch the wrist and feel a beating— pulse.
 - 2) Place a hand over the heart, at the center, the beating is much more powerful.
 - 3) Makes sense that everything flowed from heart—personality, emotions, etc.
 - c. We must protect our heart; sooner or later it will be reflected in life ([Prov 27:19](#))

C. How? In a world that serves the gods of pleasure, how do we securely guard our hearts?

1. **Accountability:** James thinks we need people looking over our shoulder ([Jam 5:16](#))
 - a. There are two types of church fellowship, and sadly only one kind really works
 - 1) **Surface:** Kind where we show up weekly, ask, “*How ya doing*” and move on
 - 2) **Biblical:** Kind where we get wrapped up in the messiness of each other’s lives
 - b. What kind is James talking about when he says to confess sin to one another?
 - c. Deprive ourselves of a power in dealing with gods of pleasure because we’re alone
 - 1) Is alcohol is the only addiction that needs a group like AA to help overcome?
 - 2) Are you dealing with any addiction tugging at your heart? *You need a posse!*
2. **Prayer:** Paul see prayer as important part of the heart guarding process ([Phil 4:6-7](#))
 - a. This isn’t the rote, rushed prayer before a meal (“*rub-a-dub, thanks for the grub*”)
 - 1) Paul stresses it by using 4 synonyms— prayer, petition, thanksgiving, request
 - 2) Bring to mind Epaphras “*always wrestling in prayer for you*” ([Col 4:12](#))
 - b. Prayer helps us to guard our minds against getting side-tracked by gods of pleasure
 - c. But you have to use it; no tool is much of a tool if left unused in the toolbox

3. **Thinking:** Paul next says that we need to think about our thinking (**Phil 4:8**)
 - a. So we're surfing the net or flipping through hundreds of cable channels
 - 1) Hey, I'm not saying all that stuff is necessarily evil or even bad in and of itself
 - 2) I'm just asking, "*Is it noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy?*"
 - b. Much of it isn't even close to that? In fact, a lot of it is much closer to the dark side
 - c. "*Garbage-in-Garbage-Out*" applies to more than just computer programming, right?
4. **Scripture:** There's a reason we're supposed to be daily Bible readers (**Psa 119:11**)
 - a. When the Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, what did Jesus do? *He quoted scripture*
 - 1) Wasn't he lucky he happened to know just the right verses that fit situation!
 - 2) We're to be devoted to scripture so it WILL come to mind when we need it
 - b. Now that doesn't mean will always follow it, but it will help to guard our hearts
 - c. No short-cuts! We must devote ourselves to scripture so we'll have it when need it!

III. Conclusion

- A. What if I had a gizmo that would project on the screen what you're thinking right now
 1. Or it would project every nasty word you've said to your family over the past week
 - a. May it would list all the TV shows that you've watched or movies you have seen
 - b. Maybe it would project a screenshot of every website you have visited this week
 2. Of course, I don't have a gizmo like that. But God does, but that not my point today.
 - a. Point is you are impacted by all the stuff you let into your heart in all kinds of ways
 - b. Those things have a way of getting out and impacting your life (**Matt 12:34-35**)
- B. We live in a world where gods of pleasure say, "*If it feels good, you have right to do it*"
 1. Our hearts are impacted by those gods constantly in subtle and not so subtle ways
 2. So we must constantly guard our hearts, or we will be led astray by these false gods
 3. David was the man after God's heart, but one careless night he forgot who he was
 - a. In the aftermath of his sin with Bathsheba, he pleads with God to recreate his heart
 - b. That Psalm of repentance becomes our text of invitation (**Psalms 51:10-12**, ESV)