

What is the Condition of my Heart?

Proverbs 4:20-27 & Luke 6:43-45

Four Years ago when I knew that we were going to be moving into the new church manse I thought I would prepare for it by blessing KJ with a house warming gift of a new vacuum cleaner because the old one we had was not doing a good job at all and half the family had allergies. It was time for a change so I did some research with KJ and we came to the conclusion that a Dyson allergy barrel model with a cyclonic engine would be a good one to have. So we bought it and initially it did a fantastic job. In the last rental home that we lived at in the Drury village before we moved into the Manse in Cooladerry Place, the carpets had never been so clean and the new vacuum actually destroyed and got rid of the colonies of carpet fleas that resided at that house. In fact it did such a good job that we didn't even have to have a professional carpet cleaner come in when we moved out. The suction and the brush head worked really well. Then we moved into the new manse and after a couple of vacuums we noticed that this fantastic new machine was not working so efficiently we thought on the brand new carpet of the manse floors. Although we had been regularly emptying the dust, fluff and rubbish we could see with our eyes from the bagless barrel when it was needed, we had not been paying full attention to the brush head and the actual heart of this machine, which was its filter.

We found that mainly hair along with other objects had wrapped itself around the brush head so that when we removed the brush from the head and cut away all the hair from the brush it was once again able to spin freely and more effectively pick up the dust and dirt from the floors as it was designed to do. When we removed the bagless barrel emptied the dust and then, further to this, unhooked the filter we found that it was full and clogged with dust. When we shook it out and then washed and rinsed and dried it and put it back into the machine, would you know it? The vacuum's suction improved markedly along with its ability to pick up all the dust and contain it all to make for cleaner flooring and clearer air with regards to allergies in the house. With the head and heart of the machine clean, clear and free of obstruction it once again worked like new, just the way it had been designed too by Mr Dyson. If only we had looked at the Dyson manual sooner and followed its instructions for the use, care and maintenance of this vacuum cleaner we could have prevented its condition from deteriorating and avoided altogether its loss of effectiveness and efficiency for a couple of weeks because it was clogged, dirty and all bound up in its head and heart, which did not allow for the fancy cyclone engine to spin and create the suction of air that it needed to operate fully and properly.

If God as our Creator and Designer were to take a look specifically at our head and heart today as the Great Physician, Dr God, in what condition will He find it in? How is your heart doing today?

In New Zealand a lot of health education is focused on keeping the heart healthy. People suffer heart disease and heart attacks, which many individuals die from every year in our nation. They are quite prevalent. The same I believe is true spiritually.

In our Proverbs reading God is telling us to prick up our ears and Concentrate! To pay close attention to the wisdom and truth that should be familiar to a believer, a child of God because, as the divine physician, God is conducting in these verses a kind of medical examination of the whole body that begins with the heart, reviewing its condition, just how well it is performing and functioning, not just physically but psychologically and spiritually.

Biblical language describes the heart as being the centre of a human's inner being represented by thought, will and feeling, in other words, the heart is the centre of the human spirit from which spring forth emotions, thoughts, motivations, even courage, and of course action, because "everything you do flows from it."

Proverbs 4:23 states, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." In this medical examination by the Divine Physician, here it is that we are cautioned by God to guard our heart above all else. To Guard means to preserve, closely watch over, and keep from danger. The reason being- it is our heart that filters everything that happens to us, and around us.

So, if we store up good things in our hearts, God's Word, Christ's command's, the fruit of the Spirit including love and faithfulness for example, then our words and actions are almost guaranteed to be good, right and wholesome. We have read in **Luke 6:45** that *"A good person brings good things out of the good stored up in their heart, and an evil person brings evil things out of the evil stored up in their heart."*

It's alright if your heart's full of good things, but if it is not, it simply means that you have neglected your own heart, which has now become filthy and clogged like the filter and head on the vacuum cleaner but it's not with dust, dirt and hair, instead your mind and feelings of your heart are filled with all kinds of foul rubbish the likes of bitterness, resentment, jealousy and impure thoughts. Jesus made a list of such things when he was speaking to his disciples on the topic of how defilement comes from

an impure heart, which serves to interrupt our fellowship and get in the way of right relationship with God.

In **Mark 7** he said ²⁰ “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. ²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

This is so because a dirty clogged heart can no longer distinguish between, and separate out, the harmful from the good and healthy stuff. The result being that hurt and heartache is allowed to enter. And hurt and heartache is the path to the dark side of our thinking, reasoning and feelings. Feelings which cannot be trusted because they lie to you in order to try and make yourself feel better and affirm unhealthy or wrong and sinful thoughts, speech and actions.

When you keep your heart pure and clean, it blocks sinful thoughts and desires that could destroy you. Which is why God always begins with the heart, then works outward. The heart, which speaks of the inner life, therefore comes first. And a pure heart is the best prescription Doctor God can give you if your desire is to live a joyful and wholesome healthy lifestyle. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.* [**Matthew 5:8**] Said Jesus.

It is important that as Christ’s disciples that we live up to His requirements by denying ourselves and in willing obedience, take up our own cross daily to bear in order to follow him. Following on from this though is an essential priority. It goes like this. If I am going to live my life each day with integrity as a committed and devoted follower of Christ, in order to do this then I am required as Proverbs 3:24 says to, *“Above all else, guard my heart, for everything I do flows from it.”* What makes this verse so important is that this saying anticipated so much of Jesus’ teaching.

Jesus’ cornerstone declaration to us begins with *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength and with all your mind.”* **Mark 12:30**

When describing the kingdom of God, Jesus revealed the things that come out of the heart defile a person **Matthew 15:16-20**.

He also taught, *“Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will be also.”* **Luke 12:34**

These teachings are about the heart, and are an encouragement to guard our hearts. There is also a connection with Jesus' teaching in the New Testament that we can make following on from 'guarding your heart' to "everything I do flowing from it."

Jesus said in **John 7:38** "*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them*" or out of them.

The Scripture alluded to by Jesus could very well be among others, Proverbs 4:23 because the sense of everything springing or flowing from the heart equates to the very same spiritual vitality which wells up as the truth is realised and connection made in your very own heart [vv20-22] as you listen, hear, see, pay attention and retain God's Word's within your heart. When you have this truth residing within it is healthily active and alive, renewing the thoughts of your mind and the attitude of your heart. And as it is living it can have the effect of welling up within you and overflowing when you speak.

And when you do talk and act, this renewed outlook makes itself felt in a Godly positive and encouraging way in the world and in the lives of others. This is a way that the Holy Spirit wells up and flows like living water out from you to touch and impact the lives of others for the good. How others choose to receive such love and truth in action is up to them because through the process of dealing with all the dirt that gets thrown around and all the rubbish that life brings, in the midst of this you just keep on keeping on guarding and preserving your own heart, as a heart for God, submitted to His Word and Will, a heart that has at it's centre the Holy Spirit filling you and ruling over you and directing your paths and words because when the Lord by his Spirit rules and reigns in you: [vv24-27]

His thoughts have now become your thoughts, His words your words, to be followed with action. And his path has become your holy and right path to walk steadfastly on the straight and narrow. God always begins with the heart, and then works outward. The heart or your inner life comes first.

"Above all else, guard my heart, for everything I do flows from it."

This verse means that God has given us the assignment to keep watch over and preserve our own hearts. It is our responsibility to guard it- no excuses. Remember God would not give us an assignment that we cannot keep. It is not optional it is a command. The heart is to be guarded at all costs. In armed warfare, the vital part of the body is always protected. In our faith, that is always the heart. The reason we perhaps have so many casualties spiritually is because the heart is ignored.

“Above all else” the heart should receive the greatest effort. We diligently protect our homes with security alarms, dead bolts and window stays. We have security lights. Some have a weapon on hand, yet we ignore our heart. Too many Christians try to live their Christian life with no effort. The instructions “above all else” tell us it is a constant warfare and will require much spiritual energy.

If an athlete ignores their training and discipline and indulges in the wrong social life and diet, then s/he will not be a very good athlete. If they let their body follow the desires of the flesh, their athletic days are over. No chance of going the Olympic Games this year. The success of your Christian life depends upon following the principles that God has laid down for us to believe and follow including as an important priority,
“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

If you do not keep the heart protected you face serious spiritual injury. The emotional roller coasters, trials and temptations of this world will clog, dirty and darken your head along with your heart filter to the point they stop working for good and you die without being able to be revived!

So, what is the condition of your heart today?

Are you carefully and diligently watching over it as prescribed by Dr God and Son?

The divine physician has been conducting an examination of the whole body that begins with the heart, reviewing its condition through scripture. Just how well is yours functioning and performing, not just physically but psychologically and spiritually?

If you are struggling will you allow Jesus Christ to come into your heart by his Spirit to forgive, heal, deliver, renew and strengthen you as God’s child today? He loves you and wants in so that he can fill you, well up and flow through and out of you as his witness in the world.

Let’s pray: Come Jesus, come into this heart...