

Chapter 20

GUARD YOUR THOUGHTS AND WORDS

(How to Be a Faithful Christian)

Psalm 19 is a little poem or song by David, the shepherd who became a king. While the Psalm is only 14 verses, it contains tremendous insights about how to find our way through the mine-field of life and to live the higher life to which we have been called. Verses 1-4 are a beautiful teaching about the general revelation of God to all mankind through nature. *The Heavens declare the glory of God...*" Verses 5-11 describe the specific revelation of God that has been given through the Scriptures. *The law of the Lord is perfect...*" (All Scriptures in this chapter are taken from the NIV unless otherwise indicated.)

At this point, starting with Verse 12, David diverts his gaze from the glory of God as revealed in His creation and in His Word, and he looks at himself and at mankind, and it is not a pretty picture. He discerns that there are enemies, giants, that harass and oppose us on our journey, and these enemies are not only external but are deeply entrenched within ourselves, within our very nature. He says, *Who can discern (understand) his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.* The Amplified Version words it, *Who can discern his lapses and errors? Clear me from hidden (and unconscious) faults.* This is one of the many teachings in Scripture that validates the ministry of inner-healing. Christianity is not only about our external actions, it is concerned first and foremost with our hearts. *As a man thinks in his **heart**, so is he..... If you confess with your lips and believe in your **heart** that Jesus is Lord..... Trust in the Lord with all your **heart**.....* And the list could go on and on.

And, in fact, the Bible reveals that the hidden motives of our hearts direct our actions and that God has X-ray vision, He can and does look into our hearts to determine the motive behind our actions. Thus David prays in Psalm 139:23-24: *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* The Amplified version has it as follows: *Search me (thoroughly), O God, and know my heart! Try me, and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* And Paul says in Romans 8:27, *Now he who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Spirit...* And Jesus says in Matthew 15:18-20, *But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean...* And James warns us in James 4:8, *Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* In my ministry I am not so concerned about people's outward ungodly actions, the bad fruits, as with the hidden motivations of their hearts that are behind the actions, the bad roots, for the Bible teaches that unless one deals with the bad roots the matter will not be resolved.

When I was in Ciudad Mante, a city about the size of Grand Junction, on my just completed trip to Mexico, I became acquainted with a fine young pastor who is regularly invited to lead special services in other churches throughout Mexico. He told me that he loved his teen-aged son and his 8-year old daughter, but that somehow he was not able to show affection toward his daughter. He said when he was on a trip he would reflect on how much he loved his daughter and determine to hug and kiss her when he returned home. But when he walked into his house and she ran up to him and held out her arms he pushed her away and made a joke of it. Why would a father, a good man, a Christian, treat his daughter in that fashion? To tell him that was not a good way to treat his daughter would be pointless. He already knows that, and he doesn't like the way he treats her. The secret is in his heart. *Out of the*

heart come the issues of life. In his case it went back to coldness and rejection by his mother. I ministered by having him forgive his mother, repent of judgments against her, repent of inner vows concerning not trusting women, and prayed for the wounds in his heart. That dealt with the bad roots so far as I could determine, but then I gave instructions about resisting and breaking this ungodly habit, for it was a deeply hidden and entrenched “way” that is ungodly and destructive.

- For some Christians there might be an issue of resentment against God, and I have previously listed some of the reasons Christians are angry at God, including: the death of a loved one and the fact that God apparently ignored their prayers; the divorce of parents or abandonment by a spouse; a child born with physical or mental defects; the long list of wounds that one’s children can inflict on their parents; etc. These are heart issues, and until they are resolved those Christians are never going to have the relationship with the Lord for which they yearn.
- For many Christians the issue is forgiveness – of a rejecting father or mother, of an abusive brother or sister, of a relative or stranger who abused them physically or sexually, etc.
- For some Christians the issue might be word curses, generational curses, witchcraft curses, trauma, or ungodly soul ties.

The Psalmist prays, “Cleanse me (or clear me) from hidden and unconscious faults.” The wounds, sins and lies hidden in the heart and mind are obviously the very faults he is beseeching God about.

David goes on in Verse 13, *Keep your servant also from presumptuous (willful) sins; may they not rule over me (or Let them not have dominion over me), then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.* What is a presumptuous sin? It is a sin that you know is a sin, it is rebellion against God, it is breaking God’s law, but you choose as an act of your will to do it anyway. The key to a presumptuous sin is your knowledge that it is a sin. Two people might commit the same sin, but one person does it out of ignorance while the other does it knowing very well what he is doing, and there is a difference when God judges those two people. Paul said that he persecuted the church, but that because he did it in ignorance God had mercy on him (1 Tim. 1:13). There was a difference in God’s attitude toward Paul and toward Herod whose persecution of the church was in blatant rebellion and hatred of God.

- When a Christian, knowing the teaching of Jesus that we must forgive others, refuses to forgive, that is a presumptuous sin.
- When a Christian who knows better starts cursing his mate or cursing God, I think that is a presumptuous sin and is very dangerous.
- When a Christian purposely bears false witness to hurt someone’s reputation, that is a presumptuous sin.
- When Christian young people who have been raised in a Bible church and know the standards of morality start cohabiting without marriage, I believe that is a presumptuous sin (and it is far more serious than it would be for a couple who have been raised without any contact with the teachings of Christ).
- When a Christian chooses to enter the homosexual lifestyle, and even goes so far as to march in a gay-pride parade, that is presumptuous and openly defiant of God.
- When an employee, a Christian, starts stealing from his company, or when Christian executives start cooking the books in order to steal from the government or from their stockholders, that is presumptuous.
- When a Christian husband or wife makes a willful decision to abandon his or her husband or wife and children, that is presumptuous.

I believe that presumptuous sins apply not only to Christians who sin but to anyone who sins in violation of his or her own conscience or knowledge of right and wrong. The Bible warns again and again about the danger of ignoring the voice of one's conscience.

The Psalmist says that if I will avoid these presumptuous sins *then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression*. In the Bible God never demands that we be morally perfect as Christ was, because we can't be. Ralph Earle in a study of Greek words, says that telios (translated "perfect" in the KJV) comes from telos, "end", and really means "having reached its end, finished, mature, complete, perfect". In other words, in the New Testament, perfect means "spiritually mature, in a loving, obedient relationship with the Lord." While God does not expect us to be morally perfect, He does expect us to be "blameless." God tells us to be blameless not only in the Old Testament but in the New. Ephesians 1:4, *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight*. Colossians 1:22, (God has reconciled you through Christ) *to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in his sight*. Also in 1 Thess. 5:23 and other places. To reiterate, God expects us to be blameless in this life: to avoid presumptuous sins, to walk in humility, holiness, love, submission to Christ.

The culmination of this Psalm is Verse 14, *May the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable (pleasing) in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer*. This verse, this prayer, these words are so central and crucial to our walk as Christians that I cannot think how to emphasize them enough. Please look at, reread, think about these words again:

May the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable (pleasing) in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

In how many ways does God emphasize the importance of words in the Bible?

- God created through His words, and we create or destroy through our words.
- If you bless others you will be blessed, but if you curse others you will be cursed.
- The Word of God is the Holy Bible. The Living Word of God is our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (There are 8 full pages, 16 columns of "word" or "words" in Strong's Concordance.)

And in how many ways does the Bible emphasize our thoughts as being crucial to our walk of faith? *As a man thinks in his heart, so is he*. There is nothing in our life as important as our thoughts. We are told to "meditate" on the Word of God, which is similar to the way a cow chews its cud. The cow burps up the hay again and again and chews on it. We are to call to mind God's words, His promises, His warnings, again and again and chew on them, think about them, until they get deep into our hearts. **No "big" sins happen suddenly. They are the result of what a person has been thinking about, meditating about in his heart and mind.**

- When an employee starts stealing from his company, that was not a sudden whim. He had been thinking about it, meditating about it for a long time.
- When a husband leaves his wife and children, that was not a sudden impulse. He has been meditating about it, perhaps thinking about the new woman he has met, comparing her charms to his wife's frumpiness, perhaps fantasizing about a new and exciting sexual relationship, and finally he chooses to make that step. It is an act of his will, and it is a presumptuous sin and a "great transgression" for which he will stand in judgment before God.

- I minister regularly in prisons, and a large percentage of inmates are there because of sexual crimes. The general population in prisons hates pedophiles, and if they learn that a man is a pedophile they find ways to make his life miserable. Needless to say, the men who have committed these crimes are very secretive about the subject. There have been occasions when inmates have shared with me privately that they are in prison because of molesting children, and sometimes they confess that they molested their own child or grandchild! And in every case they told me that pornography had been a big part of their life. When men or women meditate on pornography, it is like drinking poison. They are taking moral filth and perversion into their minds and hearts, and an old saying is “Garbage in, garbage out!”.

What is the Bible’s prescription for keeping a pure mind and heart?

- Psalm 101:3 in the NIV says: *I will walk in my house with blameless heart.* (Note: there is that word “blameless” again!) *I will set before my eyes no vile (or wicked) thing.*
- Psalm 1:1-2 says, *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.... But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.*
- And Philippians 4:8 says, *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.*

By the way, the conclusion that some people reach that “since Jesus said adultery in the heart is tantamount to actual adultery in God’s eyes, I may as well go ahead and do it” - - is an absolutely asinine, stupid conclusion. God is concerned about what is in our heart because that is what precipitates the decisions we make and the life we lead. But God tells us again and again to **RESIST TEMPTATION!** If you haven’t been thinking about it, it would not be a temptation. And if it is all the same to God, why does He tell us to **RESIST TEMPTATION?** Is it all the same to God that an extremist thinks about a suicide mission where he kills innocent women and children as if he actually does it? Is it the same if you think about adultery, if you have that temptation at times, as if you start visiting prostitutes? That you think about escaping your problems by having a few drinks as if you become a drunkard or a meth-head? **DON’T BE RIDICULOUS!** If you give in to those temptations, you will be surrendering to presumptuous (willful) sins, and soon they will exercise rule and dominion over you, and you will be guilty of great transgression in God’s eyes and will become a slave of the devil!

I want to challenge you to do something: please mark Psalm 19 in your Bible, and I exhort you to read it every morning for the next 30 days. And I exhort you to read it once a week for the rest of your life. And please memorize and meditate on Verses 12, 13, and 14: (from the Amplified)

“Who can discern his lapses and errors? Clear me from hidden and unconscious faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then shall I be blameless, and I shall be innocent and clear of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my (firm, impenetrable) rock, and my redeemer.”