

*"Let Your Heart Guard My Commandments"*  
(Proverbs 3:1-2)

Introduction: What are the things that you love to think about? What are the things that you have no trouble remembering and talking about for hours on end? Aren't they the things that you enjoy the most, the things that you love the most? Aren't they the things that have captured your affections, those things that have captured your heart? I have talked to many who have been discouraged from reading and studying anything, because they believe that they don't have the ability to retain it. But is it their memory which is really at fault? Is it because their minds cannot grasp and hold on to the things that they are being taught? These same individuals have no trouble remembering very clearly the things that they enjoy. If they love baseball, they can recite for you the complicated statistics of their favorite players. They can tell you the dates that the great players of that sport entered the hall-of-fame. They can tell you what world records they set and when. And yet, someone else who has no interest in baseball would not be able to remember those things at all, because they don't enjoy it. The problem is usually not a lack of ability, but a lack of interest, a lack of DESIRE to learn and remember those things.

This is something that should concern those of you who have difficulty concentrating on and remembering the things which the Lord reveals in His Word. If you know that there are things that you can easily learn and remember, then you know that your problem is not one of ability, but of desire. And if you are having problems desiring the things of the Lord, this indicates a problem with your heart, for the heart of the Christian loves God and the things of God. There are certain things which are lawful for the Christian which can bring a certain pleasure, but they are only temporary and quickly pass away. But God's truth is eternal, it is necessary for your life, it is your life, and you need it for your temporal and eternal well-being. These are the things that you should be gathering up like silver and gold and precious stones. You should be searching for these truths and not letting any escape, even as the jeweler who gathers up the precious gold filings on his bench and floor when his work is done, so that nothing is lost. These are the things that you should be storing up in your minds and hearts and never letting go of, for they are the source of God's blessing to you.

Last week we saw that God's wisdom and knowledge were able to help you avoid evil company and sexual temptation, two of the devil's most dangerous snares for your souls. This week I want you to see that,

*God promises you a long life of blessing if you will receive and hold fast His commandments in your heart.*

- I. *First I Want You to See that You Are Exhorted by This Passage to Know the Commandments of God and to Love Them.*
  - A. *Solomon Exhorts His Son, and through Him, God Exhorts You, Not to Forget His Law. He says, "MY SON, DO NOT FORGET MY TEACHING."*
    1. *The word translated here "teaching" is literally rendered "law." Remember that the book of Proverbs is a book in which Solomon applies the Ten Commandments to all of life. This is the law that Solomon is seeking to teach to his son.*
    2. *He exhorts him to hold on to it, to not forget it.*
      - a. *He exhorts his son who is one of God's covenant people. Even the people of God are prone often to forget the things*

which are necessary for their well-being.

- b. Often times they forgot God Himself. In 1 Samuel 12:9, we read, "BUT THEY FORGOT THE LORD THEIR GOD, SO HE SOLD THEM INTO THE HAND OF SISERA, CAPTAIN OF THE ARMY OF HAZOR, AND INTO THE HAND OF THE PHILISTINES AND INTO THE HAND OF THE KING OF MOAB, AND THEY FOUGHT AGAINST THEM."
- c. When they would forget God, and turn away from their refuge and strength, and turn to other gods, He would raise up enemies against them to chasten them. Isaiah writes, "FOR YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THE GOD OF YOUR SALVATION AND HAVE NOT REMEMBERED THE ROCK OF YOUR REFUGE. THEREFORE YOU PLANT DELIGHTFUL PLANTS AND SET THEM WITH VINE SLIPS OF A STRANGE GOD" (Isa. 17:10). But God had warned them, "IF YOU EVER FORGET THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND GO AFTER OTHER GODS AND SERVE THEM AND WORSHIP THEM, I TESTIFY AGAINST YOU TODAY THAT YOU SHALL SURELY PERISH" (Deu. 8:19).
- d. It is likewise important for you to remember the Lord and to fear Him only. And one of the signs that you begin to lose that fear is when you begin to forget His Law.
  - (i) Remember that His commandments are His requirements for you in His gracious covenant. To forget His commandments is to forget His Covenant. The Lord warns, "SO WATCH YOURSELVES, LEST YOU FORGET THE COVENANT OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHICH HE MADE WITH YOU . . . FOR THE LORD YOUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE, A JEALOUS GOD" (Deu. 4:23-24). "AND THE COVENANT THAT I HAVE MADE WITH YOU YOU SHALL NOT FORGET, NOR SHALL YOU FEAR OTHER GODS. BUT THE LORD YOUR GOD YOU SHALL FEAR" (2 Kings 17:38).
  - (ii) When you stop fearing Him and forget His covenant and His Word, then the Word which the Lord spoke through Hosea the prophet will be fulfilled in you, 'MY PEOPLE ARE DESTROYED FOR LACK OF KNOWLEDGE. BECAUSE YOU HAVE REJECTED KNOWLEDGE, I ALSO WILL REJECT YOU FROM BEING MY PRIEST. SINCE YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THE LAW OF YOUR GOD, I ALSO WILL FORGET YOUR CHILDREN' (46).
  - (iii) It is dangerous ground that you walk on when you forsake the Lord and His Covenant.

B. You Are Exhorted Therefore Not to Forget His Law, But Rather, That You Should Keep His Commandments with Your Heart.

1. This is where I said that the problem usually lies in forgetting the law of God. It is not with our heads, but with our hearts.
  - a. The problem is not that you cannot hear it.
  - b. It is not that you cannot understand it.
  - c. It is not that your memory is so bad that you cannot remember it.
  - d. The problem is that His Word is not precious enough to you that you want to remember it. You do not see its worth as you should. You do not value it enough. If His Word was as precious in your sight as it ought to be, then you would carefully store it up. You would not let one of its letters fail to make its mark upon your heart. You would carefully read it. You would carefully listen to it being preached. You would write notes to help you remember it. You would buy the best books which are able to explain it. In short,

- you would do everything you could to obtain this treasure.
- e. Now I am not discounting the fact that the devil and your indwelling sin will do everything they can to thwart you. But you must own the fact that you do not remember, because you will not remember.

2. And that is why Solomon says, "DO NOT FORGET MY TEACHING, BUT LET YOUR HEART KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS."
  - a. He says let your heart keep watch over my commandments. Let it guard them; let it protect them.
  - b. Your heart is the seat of your affections. What it loves, it will jealously guard.
  - c. Whatever your heart lays hold of, it will treasure up. It will seek to have it, to gather as much of it as it possibly can, and it will not rest until it has it.
  - d. The Lord's command to you this morning is, do not forget My Law, but treasure it up in your hearts.

II. But the Lord Does Not Leave It There. This Does Not Come By Way of Command Only, But Also by Way of Promise. God Gives to You Three Promises to Motivate You to Seek His Law and to Hold It in Your Heart Firmly.

- A. His First Promise Is that of a Long Life, "LENGTH OF DAYS."
  1. God usually lengthens the days of those who are faithfully obedient to His commandments.
  2. Just think of the saints of old who were blessed with long life on account of their faithfulness.
    - a. After Job's faith was severely tested, and it came forth like gold, he "LIVED" an additional, "140 YEARS, AND SAW HIS SONS, AND HIS GRANDSONS, FOUR GENERATIONS. AND JOB DIED, AN OLD MAN AND FULL OF DAYS" (Job 42:17).
    - b. When Jacob came in to see Pharaoh, "PHARAOH SAID TO JACOB, 'HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU LIVED?' SO JACOB SAID TO PHARAOH, 'THE YEARS OF MY SOJOURNING ARE ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY; FEW AND UNPLEASANT HAVE BEEN THE YEARS OF MY LIFE, NOR HAVE THEY ATTAINED THE YEARS THAT MY FATHERS LIVED DURING THE DAYS OF THEIR SOJOURNING'" (Gen. 47:8-9).
    - c. Isaac, Jacob's father, had lived longer. Moses writes, "NOW THE DAYS OF ISAAC WERE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY YEARS. AND ISAAC BREATHED HIS LAST AND DIED, AND WAS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE, AN OLD MAN OF RIPE AGE; AND HIS SONS ESAU AND JACOB BURIED HIM" (Gen. 35:28-29).
    - d. Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, also had lived longer, "AND THESE ARE ALL THE YEARS OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE THAT HE LIVED, ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS. AND ABRAHAM BREATHED HIS LAST AND DIED IN A RIPE OLD AGE, AN OLD MAN AND SATISFIED WITH LIFE; AND HE WAS GATHERED TO HIS PEOPLE" (Gen. 25:7-8).
    - e. Righteousness always brings blessing to the people of God, and often it prolongs their days on earth.
- B. The Second Promise Is that of Life Indeed.
  1. He refers here not only to extension of days, but years of life.
  2. And he is not speaking here merely of a long life, for a even a long life without blessing would be miserable to anyone.
  3. But it is life in the fullest sense of the word (Delitzsch Proverbs 85), life which is full and really worth living.

C. And Lastly, There Is the Promise of Peace.

1. This is the Hebrew word ~~שְׁלֵמָה~~<sup>שְׁלֵמָה</sup>, which means completeness, soundness, health, prosperity (BDB 1022-3).
2. It is "purewell-being, free from all that disturbs peace or satisfaction, internal or external contentment" (Delitzsch 85).
3. These are the blessings which God promises you if you lay hold of His Law and guard His commandments with your heart. The psalmist wrote, "COME, YOU CHILDREN, LISTEN TO ME; I WILL TEACH YOU THE FEAR OF THE LORD. WHO IS THE MAN WHO DESIRES LIFE, AND LOVES LENGTH OF DAYS THAT HE MAY SEE GOOD? KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL, AND YOUR LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. DEPART FROM EVIL, AND DO GOOD; SEEK PEACE, AND PURSUE IT. THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ARE OPEN TO THEIR CRY. THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST EVILDOERS, TO CUT OFF THE MEMORY OF THEM FROM THE EARTH" (Psalm 34:11-16).
4. And you mustn't forget that with the blessing of a long and prosperous life in this world, you also have the added and much more valuable opportunity to store up treasures in the next.

III. In Closing, I Would Like to Give You Some Directions on How You Might Learn, Remember and Guard God's Word with Your Hearts.

A. First, You Must Study God's Word to Know What It Says.

1. In order to study it, you must first get it into your minds.
  - a. You must read the Bible and pay attention to what you read. Don't let your study degenerate into a superficial reading just so you can say that you got through the whole thing. You must read it carefully and thoughtfully, and pay attention to what it says.
  - b. If it is not convenient for you to read it during the day, listen to it on tape. Hosanna ministries has the NIV and KJV versions on cassette at a very reasonable price.
  - c. You must also come to the worship services on the Lord's Day morning and evening, where you will hear the Word read and expounded.
2. Secondly, you must meditate on it to understand what it means.
  - a. Meditation is an art which is largely lost in our day.
  - b. If we can't discover the meaning of something right away, we either think that we just can't do it, or we blame our teachers for being inadequate.
  - c. But the problem is that we don't take the time to really think about the Word. You must meditate on it. Meditation is the art of turning something over and over again in your mind until its meaning is opened to your understanding.
  - d. There have been many times that I have had to study and think and rethink a passage over and over again until the meaning of it became clear. It requires a lot of hard work and effort. And for this reason it is only those who meditate on the Scriptures who will have the richer blessings of truth in their lives.
3. Thirdly, once having discovered its truth, you must seek to retain what it says, and not forget it.
  - a. All of your study and meditation will not profit you at all if you forget what it says.

- b. You must hold onto it. If it is precious in your sight you will want to hold onto it. You men seek to hold on to your jobs because you know how important they are to your wife and family to provide for them. You ladies take very special care of your wedding rings, because you know that they are one of a kind and if you ever lost it, you could never replace it. You children have things which are precious to you that you take great pains to keep from losing.
  - c. If you take such special care of these things which are only for this life, which you will someday lose anyway, how *can* you be negligent to obtain and hold on to those things which are for your eternal well-being and happiness?
  - d. You must take pains to remember these truths. Write them down. Memorize them. Refer to them again and again. Keep them in a journal or a diary. Place them on 3 x 5 cards, or other cards and carry them with you. Put them into practice by doing what they say. Pray over them and ask the Lord to make them a part of your life.
  - e. Make the effort to buy up eternal truth and don't let it get away from you.
  - f. Take this exhortation to heart! Don't let this word of instruction disappear into oblivion with all the rest of the sermons you've heard. Love the Lord and His Word, and show Him that you do by taking pains to lay hold of and to hold on to what He gives you.
- B. Remember, If You Are Struggling to Do This This Morning, It Is Not Primarily a problem with Your Head, But With Your Heart.
- 1. There are two possible reasons why you are not as interested in the things of God as you might otherwise be.
    - a. First, you may be letting your sin and the devil drive you away from it. You may not be putting enough effort into killing the old man, and putting on the new.
    - b. Or secondly, you may not be born again from above, and may yet stand in need of the new birth. If you are not renewed in your heart by the Spirit, you will not love the things of the Lord.
  - 2. To overcome these obstacles this morning, I would give you these directions.
    - a. Those of you who are outside of Christ must first come to Him to receive His grace and mercy before you will ever love His Word enough to guard it in your hearts. You must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation and turn from all of your sins. You must call upon God to change your hearts and cause you to be born again from above. Then He will put a love of His holy things within you, and then you will treasure them up.
    - b. But for those of you who know and love the Lord Jesus, and hate the reluctance that you find within yourselves to study and remember God's Law, you must set your whole heart, through the power of the Spirit, to put to death the deeds of the old man, and put on the new. You must stop feeding your flesh with worldly things, and deny it. And you must feed your soul on the means of grace, praying and asking God to take away your love of the world and to give you a

greater love for spiritual things.

- c. In whatever circumstance you are in this morning, may God grant you the grace to take a firm hold on His law, to guard it with your love and obedience, and to reap the benefits that He is pleased to give you. Don't turn your hearts away from His message to you this morning, but let His Word have its perfect work to teach you the way in which you should walk. Amen.