

Week 2. Keeping the Heart by John Flavel
The Reasons For This Great Work...

(1) Glory of God.

Flavel says heart-sins are evil in God's sight. Genesis 6:5-7.

(Why does Flavel say that this provokes God?)

Jer 4:14 "How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

Is this a request by God? Invitation? Challenge?

'Their offerings won't be accepted' JF

Why does God give such a list of these four comparisons?

Ox, lamb, grain and incense ... murder, dog, pig, and idols.

"They have chosen their own ways,

Their soul delights in their abominations." Isaiah 66:3

Why did Augustine steal the fruit from the pear tree? MM

Simon Magus: The 'difficulty of pardon' for heart-sins. J.F.

Acts 8:22 *"perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee"*

(2) Sincerity of heart ("without cracks in your heart")

A careless person about their heart ... is a hypocrite in their faith.

2 Ki 10:31 *"But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD,
the God of Israel, with all his heart."* NASB

Jehu did material good but did not purge 'unworthy selfish intentions'. JF

Ez 33:31 *"their heart goes after their covetousness"*

"The word of the LORD..." Ez 33:32 "You are to them like a sensual song..."

'There still remains some wildness in the thoughts and notions of the best Christians to humble them.' JF

Can we hear anguish about "the charge of reigning hypocrisy" pg 19?

Ps 119:9, 11 (Does someone have this by memory?)

Flavel warns about “sin lodging quietly in your heart”, about “habitual and uncontrolled heart-wandering away from God” to be a “sad and dangerous symptom”.

A “good sign” to “engage your heart with God” and “ask for God’s grace” ...to “oppose sins when they first appear”, to “grieve”, to be “humbled by the evils of your heart”. JF

(3.) “The beauty of our conversation!”

1 Pt 2:11-12 “Keep your **behavior excellent** among the Gentiles ... that they may observe your good deeds.”

Ps 45:1 KJV “My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made ... my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Indite: “write, compose, put in writing, to dictate (Merriam – Webster)

Note: “Indict” page 15 and “indite” page 21.

Ps 45:1 NAS95 “My heart overflows with a good theme.”

JF: Take a Christian with a good attitude and notice how serious, heavenly, and profitable his life and pious exercises will be!”

Pr 12:16 “*The righteous is a guide to his neighbor.*”

What category of exhortation is Flavel using in this section?

4. Comfort: “Strengthen “com-forte””

The comfort of our souls depends on the keeping of our hearts.

The literal meaning of ‘comfort’ = to give strength.

An important section here... ‘But suppose it is possible for a careless Christian to attain assurance. It is impossible for him to retain it for a long time... unless extra-ordinary care is used.’ JF

“Those who think that assurance may be obtained without work are mistaken.” ...“I do not deny that it is the work and office of the Holy Spirit to assure you.” JF

Paraphrase: “A writer in his infancy panted for God’s assurance, asking for a voice from heaven, a miraculous voice from trees and stones. He was shown the better and **ordinary way**: searching the Word and his own heart.” *Is this autobiographical by Flavel, and is the heart working in the realm of memory, conscience and understanding?*

“Yet I confidently affirm if you ever attain assurance in the **ordinary way** wherein God dispenses it, you must take care with your own hearts.” JF

“Another person was driven by temptation to borders of despair, but was sweetly calmed and assured “not by extraordinary revelation, but by subjecting my understanding to the Scriptures, and comparing my heart with them.” (acronym MCU: *memory, conscience and understanding*)
How would you apply “compare” to the MCU acronym?

“The Spirit assures us by witnessing our adoption:
(1) Objectively by producing grace (love cf: pg 26) in our souls, and
(2) effectively by shining light upon His own work.”

“First He infuses the grace, then open the eye of the heart to see it.” JF

“The comfort of our souls rises and falls to keep our heart with all diligence.” *Do you remember what the word “comfort” means?*

5. Growth: A gracious heart has roots in love.

Note on Flavel’s use of ‘grace’. Eph 3:17 ‘...rooted in love, or grace. Grace in the heart is the root of every gracious word in the mouth...’

‘Grace’ for Flavel is love, beauty, refinement, etc... ‘A gracious heart, diligently kept, feeds many precious thoughts of God in a day.’ JF

Psalm 63:5-6 *“My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips. 6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.”*

Psalm 139:7-8 *“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! 18 If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You.*

6. “Stop at the 1st or 2nd, not the 5th.”

Flavel describes five stages of temptation.

(ONE) The actual presence OR the thought of the temptation.

(TWO) ‘Action of the appetite provoked by imagination.’ J.F.

(THREE) Deciding how to accomplish it. J.F.

(FOUR) Deciding TO do it.

(FIVE) Doing it.

Did Flavel cover all five bases here?

James 1:13-15 “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”

‘The temptation would have been stopped in the 1st or 2nd stage’ J.F.

‘... And yes, it is easily stopped there, because in the motion of a stone falling from the top of a hill, it is easily stopped at first, but once set in motion, it acquires strength by descending.’ JF

“...for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written:

“BUT THE RIGHTEOUS ONE WILL LIVE BY FAITH.” Rom 1:16-17

From the NASB-95 footnotes for Hebrews 11:1.

“Faith is the substance of things expected, the evidence of things not seen.”