

PROVERBS 4:23

THE PRIORITY OF SOUL CARE

Five details from Proverbs 4:23 for understanding the priority of soul care.

I. The Task

*"To keep the heart...is nothing else but the constant care and diligence of such a renewed man, to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace hath reduced it, and daily strives to hold it... To keep the heart is to carefully preserve it from sin, which disorders it; and maintain that spiritual and gracious frame, which fits it for a life of communion with God."*¹ – John Flavel

II. The Responsibility

*"The heart is the *primum vivens*, the first thing that lives, and it must be the *primum vertens*, the first thing that turns... In religion the heart is all."*² – Thomas Watson

III. The Priority

IV. The Fountain

*"Heart' in the Bible could well be regarded as the king of anthropological terms" in both the Old and New Testaments and they "relate to man's mission-control center... So, although references to לב (lēb) as a physical, blood-pumping organ are virtually non-existent, the figurative sense of 'the innermost part of man' permeates portions of the Old Testament... The emotional function of the heart in the Old Testament is definitely in the background. Also in the background is the function of 'desire and longing.' What is conspicuously in the foreground, by a large majority, are the term's respective emphases on man's rationality and his volitionality."*³
– George Zemek

V. The Reason

¹ John Flavel, *The Works of John Flavel, Volume V* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1968), 426.

² Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 53.

³ George J. Zemek, *A Biblical Theology of the Doctrines of Sovereign Grace* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 16-17.