



## Daily Verse and Comment

### Jeremiah 17:9

(9) The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

*King James Version*

One of our greatest enemies lurks within us, poised to bring disaster on us if we allow it to take control. This devious, corrupt enemy even hides its motives from itself, so that its owner does not really know it. It is full of deceit, folly, and incurable corruption, and it often prompts us to act against our best interests before we are even aware that we are weakly following its urges. Just what is this enemy that is so well concealed, evil, and against our own good?

[Jeremiah 17:9](#) reveals it to us: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" As the *Expositor's Commentary* points out, "In [Old Testament](#) usage, the heart signifies the total inner being and includes reason." The heart is a biblical codeword for the way we think, feel, and make decisions, and unfortunately, it is heavily influenced by our bodily needs and desires (which the Bible calls our flesh), as well as the promptings of [Satan](#).

However, [God](#) does not leave us without instruction on how to protect ourselves from the misguidance of our hearts. [Proverbs 4:23](#) cautions, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." We are to keep or guard the heart with great care and attentiveness, watching over it like a hawk, as it were, because to a large degree it determines the course of our lives. Guarding the heart is serious business to God.

To guard something is to watch over or care for, to protect, to control. A guard must remain vigilant and take precautions both not to be surprised by his [adversary](#) and to avoid being distracted. If we take this responsibility in a

casual manner, we are likely to let our diligence slip, and the enemy, our own heart, will break out and cause us harm.

Why is guard duty on our hearts so important? Because the heart directs us in all we do, if we are not alert in this culture, where temptation, distraction, and ungodly ideas bombard us constantly, it can lead us to [sin](#) and on to all of its terrible consequences. In effect, guarding our hearts is where our conversion begins and ends. If with God's help we can control our heart, we are well on the path toward righteousness and godliness.

The heart will justify hatred, prejudice, lust, laziness, anger, revenge, [gossip](#), criticism, resentment, idolatry, murder, theft, deceit, selfishness, etc.! It will soften black and white into shades of gray. It will manipulate circumstances to provide it opportunities to do what it wants. It will play games of "just this once" and "God wants me to be happy." It will patiently erode even the most resolute decision through doubts, temptations, and twisted reasoning. It is a formidable adversary, and thus must be dealt with, as the proverb says, diligently and firmly.

Why must we take such a hard line with it? "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the [law of God](#), nor indeed can be" ([Romans 8:7](#)). For all the years prior to our calling, our hearts, which we trusted, had been programmed in [this world](#) by Satan. The heart had had its way, and it had become used to its freedom to sin at will, to fulfill its desires, to get its way. But when God calls us to His way of life, the heart is required to change drastically—to the point that God says that He must give us new hearts (see [Ezekiel 36:26](#)). Even with the Spirit of God at work within us, the heart will work to do all it can to satisfy itself.

[Proverbs 4:24-26](#) lays out the general parameters of what we have to do to stay out of trouble: "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." The advice is to control what one says and does and what one allows his eyes to view.

In other words, we are to monitor both what comes into our hearts and what we allow our hearts to spit out as words and deeds. [Jesus](#) says in [Mark 7:15](#),

"[T]he things which come out of him, those are the things which defile a man." It is the old "garbage in, garbage out" process. God wants us to reverse this human failing so that it becomes "[goodness](#) in, goodness out."

— John O. Reid

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