

MANAGING OUR THINKING FOR BLESSING
Part II: Managing Our Thinking To GUARD It FROM Others
(Proverbs 4:14-16, 20-22, 23-27)

I. Introduction

- A. Throughout my pastoral ministry, I have noticed a need for myself and other believers to manage our own thinking as opposed to letting other errant, self-serving and hence harmful parties dictate it **for** us.
- B. Paul spoke of this matter in 1 Timothy, showing that, (a) negatively, men who pay heed (*prosecho*) to myths and genealogies veer from Scripture (1:3-4; 6:3-5) and/or indulge (*prosecho*) in lustful excesses (3:8). They may often end up paying heed (*prosecho*) to deceiving spirits and demonic doctrines (4:1). (b) Opposite this, Timothy was to manage his thinking in paying heed (*prosecho*) to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching (4:13) and being attentive (*epecho*) to his life and doctrine (4:16).
- C. Well, we view Proverbs 4:14-27 on managing our thinking to guard it from others' harmful influences:

II. Managing Our Thinking To GUARD It FROM Others, Proverbs 4:14-16, 20-22, 23-27.

- A. Solomon expressed the need for his maturing son (4:1) to watch out for evil people who "are robbed of slumber till they make someone [else] fall", Proverbs 4:14-16. Such people do violence to others in their evil efforts to get others to do their bidding, and that for their own evil ends, Proverbs 4:17.
- B. Accordingly, he called on his son to heed his, Solomon's words **opposite** heeding the words of such evil people: doing so was important enough to make the difference in his life and health, Proverbs 4:20-22.
- C. Having thus seriously *motivated* his son to heed his own words over those of evil, harmful, self-serving manipulators, Solomon **urged** his son *above all* to guard his heart, or thinking from such people, 4:23.
- D. Then, Proverbs 4:24-27 reveal the **practical methodology**, the actual **steps** for **implementing** such a *guard* against the efforts of such godless, self-serving, manipulative people as follows:
 - 1. **Step One - We should guard our thinking by avoiding voicing words that deviate from what is upright, Prov. 4:24.** The reasoning behind such a directive rests in the fact that our words reflect our hearts, and if our own hearts are twisted, we are more easily misled by twisted words and thoughts from others, 2 Tim. 3:13b NIV. Keeping our own speech **upright** keeps our **thinking upright** as well, making us less vulnerable to being influenced in thinking by the twisted words of evil, harmful people!
 - 2. **Step Two - We should guard our thinking by focusing on our upright goals, not letting ourselves get distracted from them, Prov. 4:25.** 2 Timothy 2:4 NIV puts this thought another way, stating we must not let ourselves be distracted by lawful but yet civilian affairs when our Commanding Officer, Jesus Christ, has called us as spiritual soldiers to a higher calling than civilian life. When we are thus focused, it is hard for manipulative, harmful, self-serving people to influence us to the wrong way!
 - 3. **Step Three - We should guard our thinking by taking sensible paths to our goals, Prov. 4:26.**
 - a. Solomon called upon his son to make level paths for his feet, paths that did not climb steep hills that would wear him out excessively, hindering his obtaining his goals, nor paths that easily led downhill that were too easy, and caused him to reach less-desirable goals than was possible, 4:26a.
 - b. He called upon his son to take ways that were firm, or ways that minimized undue risk of loss, 26b.
 - c. Hence, Solomon called his son to take **sensible** paths: these would tend to protect one from being too tempted to heed errant manipulators out of fatigue or fear (due to hard, upward and risky ways), or out of lazy carelessness (an easy downhill path), cf. Proverbs 30:7-9.
 - 4. **Step Four - We should guard our thinking by sticking TO the right path once we set ourselves upon it, Prov. 4:27.** We stay out of evil when we avoid swerving from the right path, cf. 2 Tim. 2:5.

Lesson and Application: *As self-serving, evil and harmful manipulators are to be OVERCOME by how we manage our OWN thinking, and since our doing so affects the quality of life and health we will come to enjoy, we are to guard our thinking from their control as follows: (1) we keep our OWN WORDS and thus THOUGHTS upright to deter our being vulnerable to being misled by error. (2) We set and stay focused on upright goals. (3) We take sensible paths toward those goals, ways that minimize our vulnerability to temptations for swerving from them when manipulative people try to voice such temptations to our harm. Finally, (4) we stick TO those upright, sensible pathways!*