

## My Grandfather's Garden

I remember as young boy working with my dad. He was in the heating oil business, and during the summer months, I would work with him to earn money for those things I thought that I couldn't do without - a new bike, a baseball glove, a new pair of Chuck Taylor's. At the end of our work day, we would go back to our office/garage to clean our equipment and our work truck. My grandfather Nunzio Muggeo, would often be there, hard at work tending his garden. Poppy (as I used to call him) had a huge garden adjacent to the garage in which he grew all kinds of vegetables including; cucumbers, radishes, eggplant, zucchini, grapes (for making homemade wine) and of course his precious beefsteak tomatoes. What I remember most about his garden however was not what was in it, but rather what was not there. You see, there were no weeds, no rocks, no rubbish, no twigs, no sticks....it was perfect. Everything was orderly, in perfect rows and alignment. Poppy even had a well that he drew water from to keep his plants properly watered. What made my grandfather's garden fruitful was that he didn't allow "intruders" to enter into his garden. He was like a soldier standing guard at his post, not allowing anything in that didn't belong there - including careless grandchildren. God forbid something tried to sneak in (weeds), he would immediately and angrily rip them up before they could take root and overtake his crops.

This example of tending to one's own garden has never left me, and now as a Christian, it becomes incredibly relevant. Recently, I was reading from Proverbs chapter 4. As I read verse 23 "keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it flows the issues of life" and thought about what it meant to "keep thy heart". I was reminded of my grandfather as he "kept" his garden. In the Hebrew text with which this verse was written, the word used for "keep" is *natsar*, meaning "to watch" or "to guard". This word was used to express the idea of guarding something such as a vineyard, or a garden. As the verse continues, the Hebrew word for "heart", *leb* describes this area not as an organ, but as the place that is receptive to both influences from the outer world and from God Himself. As I read on further, I had to ask myself "am I guarding my heart with all diligence? Am I conscious of keeping things in order, or do I have a "landscaper" taking care of my garden, freeing me up to pursue godless entertainment and vanities?

In a world that often points to behavior modification as a way to deal with life's issues, it is important to realize that God's word teaches something totally different - heart modification. We are ultimately responsible for the condition of our own heart (or garden) and will someday be rewarded in heaven by the fruit that was produced from our lives. Satan is constantly attempting to sow bad seeds into our garden, roaming about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Notice that he is seeking to see who is not keeping their garden.

So I ask you "are you keeping your garden? Are you watching it like Nunzio? If something slips into it, are you uprooting it immediately and angrily (it's ok to be angry at the devil's schemes), or allowing it to grow while you attend to the cares of the world. Only you know what the answer is

Rehearse your victories

Frank