

“Keep Thyself”

Scripture Reading:

I Timothy 5:22 “LAY HANDS SUDDENLY ON NO MAN, NEITHER BE PARTAKER OF OTHER MEN'S SINS: **KEEP THYSELF PURE.**”

The admonition by the apostle to “KEEP THYSELF” is a full time job. As we considered in a lesson two weeks ago old Satan is like lion prowling through the underbrush waiting to ambush us with temptation. As any intelligent adversary would; he will attack us where we are weakest. The Apostle Paul also encouraged Timothy:

“TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF, AND UNTO THE DOCTRINE; CONTINUE IN THEM: FOR IN DOING THIS THOU SHALT BOTH SAVE THYSELF, AND THEM THAT HEAR THEE.” **I Timothy 4:16**

As Jesus observed the final Passover with his disciples he told them that one of them would betray him. Even though they had lived, worked, and shared their very lives with him; even though they were as devoted to him as anyone we know today they realized the strength of our adversary:

“AND THEY WERE EXCEEDING SORROWFUL, AND BEGAN EVERY ONE OF THEM TO SAY UNTO HIM, LORD, IS IT I?” **Matthew 26:22**

There are a number of things that we need to consider in order to “KEEP THYSELF” so let us look at as many as our time will permit in this lesson.

Keep Yourself Out of Other People’s Business

The first admonition we want to consider is that man needs to keep himself out of God’s business. Jehovah God has revealed to us how he is to be worshiped, how he expects to be served and how he expects us to conduct ourselves during our brief time on earth. What we have in scripture is the Word of God:

II Timothy 3:16-17 “ALL SCRIPTURE *is* GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD, AND *is* PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE, FOR REPROOF, FOR CORRECTION, FOR INSTRUCTION IN RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED UNTO ALL GOOD WORKS.”

And then the Apostle Peter assures us as well:

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II Peter 1:2-3 “GRACE AND PEACE BE MULTIPLIED UNTO YOU THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND OF JESUS OUR LORD, ACCORDING AS HIS DIVINE POWER HATH GIVEN UNTO US ALL THINGS THAT *pertain* UNTO LIFE AND GODLINESS, THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM THAT HATH CALLED US TO GLORY AND VIRTUE:”

It is our responsibility to carry out what God has commanded, to worship and serve him. After spending his entire live in debauchery, seeking material gain and all of those things that men lust after, Solomon wrote:

“LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER: FEAR GOD, AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE *duty* OF MAN.”
Ecclesiastes 12:13

This is the “WHOLE OF MAN”, this is the purpose that God had for mankind when he created us and placed us on this earth. It is our purpose to serve God and keep his commandments. We should be as the Psalmist:

PSALMS 119:145 “I CRIED WITH *my* WHOLE HEART; HEAR ME, O LORD: I WILL KEEP THY STATUTES.”

The second admonition we need to consider is that we “KEEP THYSELF” out of “OTHER MEN’S MATTERS”. Hear the words of the Apostle Peter:

I Peter 4:15 “BUT LET NONE OF YOU SUFFER AS A MURDERER, OR AS A THIEF, OR AS AN EVILDOER, OR AS A BUSYBODY IN OTHER MEN'S MATTERS.”

If the truth be known, we probably have all that we can handle just to take care of our own business. If we have the kind of time available to us would allow us to:

“...LEARN TO BE IDLE, WANDERING ABOUT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE; AND NOT ONLY IDLE, BUT TATTLERS ALSO AND BUSYBODIES, SPEAKING THINGS WHICH THEY OUGHT NOT.” **I Timothy 5:13**

There is plenty of work in the Lord’s vineyard for all to do and if we have that kind of time on our hands we need to go find that work and do it. We need to do as Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica:

I Thessalonians 4:11 “AND THAT YE STUDY TO BE QUIET, AND TO DO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, AND TO WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS, AS WE COMMANDED YOU;”

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Keep Our Hearts With All Diligence

Of course, the heart that is considered here is the intellect, the mind, that part of man that rules his being and guides his life. It is that part of man that thinks, loves, believes and causes us to obey that which we respect and honor. The heart of man is the source of all of his conduct. The wisdom of God tells us:

Proverbs 4:23 “KEEP THY HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE; FOR OUT OF IT *are* THE ISSUES OF LIFE.”

Every deed is first committed in the heart. Jesus said:

Matthew 15:18-19 “BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH PROCEED OUT OF THE MOUTH COME FORTH FROM THE HEART; AND THEY DEFILE THE MAN. FOR OUT OF THE HEART PROCEED EVIL THOUGHTS, MURDERS, ADULTERIES, FORNICATIONS, THEFTS, FALSE WITNESS, BLASPHEMIES:”

This is the reason that the Christ gave his disciples and through them the following instructions for us:

Keeping the heart will keep one from adultery:

Matthew 5:28 “BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT WHOSOEVER LOOKETH ON A WOMAN TO LUST AFTER HER HATH COMMITTED ADULTERY WITH HER ALREADY IN HIS HEART.”

From a hate equal to murder:

I John 3:15 “WHOSOEVER HATETH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER: AND YE KNOW THAT NO MURDERER HATH ETERNAL LIFE ABIDING IN HIM.”

Keeping our hearts from these thoughts that will cause us to sin will also help us to “KEEP THYSELF” from a multitude of other sins that are more common.

From being hypercritical of anyone and making a hypocrite of ourselves:

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Matthew 7:3-5 “AND WHY BEHOLDEST THOU THE MOTE THAT IS IN THY BROTHER’S EYE, BUT CONSIDEREST NOT THE BEAM THAT IS IN THINE OWN EYE? OR HOW WILT THOU SAY TO THY BROTHER, LET ME PULL OUT THE MOTE OUT OF THINE EYE; AND, BEHOLD, A BEAM *is* IN THINE OWN EYE? THOU HYPOCRITE, FIRST CAST OUT THE BEAM OUT OF THINE OWN EYE; AND THEN SHALT THOU SEE CLEARLY TO CAST OUT THE MOTE OUT OF THY BROTHER’S EYE.”

From letting our egos rule our lives, or as folks down home said get a case of the bighead:

Philippians 2:2-3 “FULFIL YE MY JOY, THAT YE BE LIKEMINDED, HAVING THE SAME LOVE, *being* OF ONE ACCORD, OF ONE MIND. *Let* NOTHING *be done* THROUGH STRIFE OR VAINGLORY; BUT IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM OTHER BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.”

From being selfish; which is also covetousness that will lead us to neglect our Savior and the needs of our neighbors:

Matthew 25:43 “I WAS A STRANGER, AND YE TOOK ME NOT IN: NAKED, AND YE CLOTHED ME NOT: SICK, AND IN PRISON, AND YE VISITED ME NOT.”

From envy:

Proverbs 14:30 “A SOUND HEART *is* THE LIFE OF THE FLESH: BUT ENVY THE ROTTENNESS OF THE BONES.”

From unforgiveness:

Colossians 3:13 “FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANY MAN HAVE A QUARREL AGAINST ANY: EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO *do* YE.”

Keep Our Tongue With a Bridle

The scripture that most of us are probably most familiar with regarding keeping a bridle on our tongue is **James 3:3**. There the brother of Jesus uses this illustration to help us understand that this powerful little member can be controlled just as is a large animal with the proper restraint or even a large ship with something as small as a rudder. David, through the inspiration of God writes:

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Psalms 39:1 “I SAID, I WILL TAKE HEED TO MY WAYS, THAT I SIN NOT WITH MY TONGUE: I WILL KEEP MY MOUTH WITH A BRIDLE, WHILE THE WICKED IS BEFORE ME.”

To bridle our mouth or our tongue means to:

Not gossip:

Leviticus 19:16 “THOU SHALT NOT GO UP AND DOWN **as** A TALEBEARER AMONG THY PEOPLE: NEITHER SHALT THOU STAND AGAINST THE BLOOD OF THY NEIGHBOUR; I **am** THE **LORD**.”

This is closely related to the admonition to mind our own business.

Not Take God’s Name in Vain:

Exodus 20:7 “THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN; FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.”

While this admonition applies to our tongues; as we saw in our study of Exodus this includes most any form of disrespect for God and his commandments.

Not Engage in Filthy Communication:

Colossians 3:8 “BUT NOW YE ALSO PUT OFF ALL THESE; ANGER, WRATH, MALICE, BLASPHEMY, FILTHY COMMUNICATION OUT OF YOUR MOUTH.”

Nor speak hastily:

James 1:19 “WHEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, LET EVERY MAN BE SWIFT TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO WRATH:”

Regarding the control of our tongues we have this promise from the pen of the Apostle Peter:

I Peter 3:10 “FOR HE THAT WILL LOVE LIFE, AND SEE GOOD DAYS, LET HIM REFRAIN HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL, AND HIS LIPS THAT THEY SPEAK NO GUILDE:”

And this warning from James:

James 1:26 “IF ANY MAN AMONG YOU SEEM TO BE RELIGIOUS, AND BRIDLETH NOT HIS TONGUE, BUT DECEIVETH HIS OWN HEART, THIS MAN'S RELIGION IS VAIN.”

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Keep Our Bodies Under Subjection

Mankind was designed by God as a free moral agent, one who could determine his own destiny, one who could control his natural desires or let them rule his life. After being driven from the Garden of Eden due to their sin, it didn't take long for man to degenerate into something that God couldn't stand.

Genesis 6:5 “AND GOD SAW THAT THE WICKEDNESS OF MAN **was** GREAT IN THE EARTH, AND **that** EVERY IMAGINATION OF THE THOUGHTS OF HIS HEART **was** ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY.”

As we look at the world around us today we see that those who have none of the influence of the Word of God in their lives are not any better. We too can be caught up in their fleshly lusts:

I Peter 2:11 “DEARLY BELOVED, I BESEECH YOU AS STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS, ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS, WHICH WAR AGAINST THE SOUL;”

To abstain from the “WORKS OF THE FLESH”:

Galatians 5:19-21 “NOW THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE MANIFEST, WHICH ARE **these**; ADULTERY, FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS, LASCIVIOUSNESS, IDOLATRY, WITCHCRAFT, HATRED, VARIANCE, EMULATIONS, WRATH, STRIFE, SEDITIONS, HERESIES, ENVYINGS, MURDERS, DRUNKENNESS, REVELLINGS, AND SUCH LIKE: OF THE WHICH I TELL YOU BEFORE, AS I HAVE ALSO TOLD **you** IN TIME PAST, THAT THEY WHICH DO SUCH THINGS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

And as the apostle noted in the last phrase of this reading the Christian must do this lest he or she be lost. Even the Apostle Paul had to deal with these temptations:

I Corinthians 9:27 “BUT I KEEP UNDER MY BODY, AND BRING IT INTO SUBJECTION: LEST THAT BY ANY MEANS, WHEN I HAVE PREACHED TO OTHERS, I MYSELF SHOULD BE A CASTAWAY.”

Keep Ourselves From Idolatry

In the closing words of this first epistle the Apostle John simply tells us:

I John 5:21 “LITTLE CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS. AMEN.”

God has always given mankind laws regarding the worship of idols. Under the Mosaic Covenant we find the first commandment being:

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Exodus 20:3 “THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”

And then begins an explanation in the very next verse:

Exodus 20:4 “THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE, OR ANY LIKENESS *of any thing* THAT *is* IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT *is* IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT *is* IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH.”

But idolatry is not limited to the worship of images or man made gods. It can include anything that we would raise above our devotion to Jehovah. In addition to the images that were worshiped by Israel of old we can add:

Hero Worship:

When the Apostle Peter answered the call of Cornelius to come from Joppa to Caesarea we read:

Acts 10:25-26 “AND AS PETER WAS COMING IN, CORNELIUS MET HIM, AND FELL DOWN AT HIS FEET, AND WORSHIPPED *him*. BUT PETER TOOK HIM UP, SAYING, STAND UP; I MYSELF ALSO AM A MAN.”

Another example is that of Paul when he healed the man in Lystra who had been crippled from birth. The priest of Jupiter, the god worshiped by that city, brought oxen and garlands and prepared to worship Paul and Barnabas when Paul stopped them:

Acts 14:15 “AND SAYING, SIRRS, WHY DO YE THESE THINGS? WE ALSO ARE MEN OF LIKE PASSIONS WITH YOU, AND PREACH UNTO YOU THAT YE SHOULD TURN FROM THESE VANITIES UNTO THE LIVING GOD, WHICH MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, AND THE SEA, AND ALL THINGS THAT ARE THEREIN.”

Pleasure Worship:

What is probably the most common kind of idol worship in the world we know today is that of pleasure worship. Many more men this day have worshipped their own pleasure that ever darkened the door of a house of worship of any kind. Paul warns the brethren at Corinth about becoming idolaters:

I Corinthians 10:7 “NEITHER BE YE IDOLATERS, AS *were* SOME OF THEM; AS IT IS WRITTEN, THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND ROSE UP TO PLAY.”

Paul warns us about “PERILOUS TIMES” that were to come and the degeneration of mankind through his second letter to Timothy in:

II Timothy 3:4 “TRAITORS, HEADY, HIGH-MINDED, LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD.”

Worship of Mammon – Covetousness:

Paul also wrote about the covetousness and called it the idolatry.

Colossians 3:5 “MORTIFY THEREFORE YOUR MEMBERS WHICH ARE UPON THE EARTH; FORNICATION, UNCLEANNESS, INORDINATE AFFECTION, EVIL CONCUPISCENCE, AND COVETOUSNESS, WHICH IS IDOLATRY.”

“KEEP THYSELF” Sound in the Faith

If we are to prevail, keep ourselves pure, consecrated, sanctified and dedicated to Jehovah God it is imperative that we keep ourselves pure in they faith. Paul wrote to his son in the faith:

I Timothy 6:20 “O TIMOTHY, KEEP THAT WHICH IS COMMITTED TO THY TRUST, AVOIDING PROFANE AND VAIN BABBLINGS, AND OPPOSITIONS OF SCIENCE FALSELY SO CALLED:”

Keeping the church sound in the faith has always been a problem. Paul wrote to the brethren at Galatia:

Galatians 1:6-7 “I MARVEL THAT YE ARE SO SOON REMOVED FROM HIM THAT CALLED YOU INTO THE GRACE OF CHRIST UNTO ANOTHER GOSPEL: WHICH IS NOT ANOTHER; BUT THERE BE SOME THAT TROUBLE YOU, AND WOULD PERVERT THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.”

Apostasy is such a gradual thing in many places. If there is a change agent involved they are trained to push a little bit and if they get resistance back off and try again later. They keep doing this until they reach the ultimate goal of introducing whatever they are advocating or getting whatever change they were after. Many of my brethren don't even realize what has happened to them until it is too late. Paul warned:

II Timothy 4:3-4 “FOR THE TIME WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL THEY HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, HAVING ITCHING EARS; AND THEY SHALL TURN AWAY *their* EARS FROM THE TRUTH, AND SHALL BE TURNED UNTO FABLES.”

Consequently we each need to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil as the Hebrew writer records:

Hebrews 5:14 "BUT STRONG MEAT BELONGETH TO THEM THAT ARE OF FULL AGE, EVEN THOSE WHO BY REASON OF USE HAVE THEIR SENSES EXERCISED TO DISCERN BOTH GOOD AND EVIL."

"KEEP THYSELF" in Unity and Fellowship

The apostle Paul wrote:

Ephesians 4:3 "ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE."

We need each other. We need the strength that we gain from being with and having people to help us who are of like precious faith. We need to be able to lean upon each other in times of trial and trouble. We need to be able to stand together against the winds of false doctrine that would sweep us aside if we allowed that to happen. We need to be of one mind and one heart in our relationship with God. If we are not of one mind in the faith are we indeed one? King David writes:

Psalms 133:1 "BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY!"

Our savior prayed that we might be one:

John 17:20-21 "NEITHER PRAY I FOR THESE ALONE, BUT FOR THEM ALSO WHICH SHALL BELIEVE ON ME THROUGH THEIR WORD; THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE; AS THOU, FATHER, *art* IN ME, AND I IN THEE, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE ONE IN US: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME."

God hates those who sow discord among brethren:

Proverbs 6:16-19 "THESE SIX THINGS DOTTH THE LORD HATE: YEA, SEVEN ARE AN ABOMINATION UNTO HIM: A PROUD LOOK, A LYING TONGUE, AND HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD, AN HEART THAT DEVISETH WICKED IMAGINATIONS, FEET THAT BE SWIFT IN RUNNING TO MISCHIEF, A FALSE WITNESS THAT SPEAKETH LIES, AND HE THAT SOWETH DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN."

"KEEP THYSELF" In the Love of God

Jude 21 "KEEP YOURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD, LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE."

Invitation