

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." (1 Peter 4:11).

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WE ARE KEEPERs

by John Isaac Edwards

There is "...a time to keep..." (Eccl. 3:6). The word "keep" occurs 362 times in my Bible. Man's first job was that of a keeper (Gen. 2:15). God expected His Old Testament people to be keepers. Israel was to keep the Passover (Ex. 12:14), God's statutes (Ex. 15:26), the covenant (Ex. 19:5), the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8), their souls (Dt. 4:9), the Lord's word (Dt. 23:23), and the like. Have you thought about the fact that we are keepers?

1) TONGUE KEEPERs. The Psalmist recorded, "*Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile*" (Ps. 34:13). He went on to say, "*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*" (Ps. 39:1). Failure to keep the tongue has led many to sin with their tongue. Psalm 141:3 says, "*Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*" Wise Solomon taught, "*He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction*" (Prov. 13:3). And again, "*Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles*" (Prov. 21:23). That's pretty good advice, isn't it? It might just

keep us out of a lot of trouble, if we will just follow it!

2) HEART KEEPERs. The Bible says, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life*" (Prov. 4:23). The only one that can keep my heart is me. This is a full-time job! It's so important to do so, lest we develop some spiritual heart disease. "*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*" (Mt. 15:19). A great way to keep one's heart is "...whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

3) SELF KEEPERs. The Scriptures often talk about keeping self. At the Jerusalem discussion over fleshly circumcision and Old Testament law keeping it was decided to write letters with the admonition, "*That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well....*"

(Acts 15:29). The apostle Paul recognized the need for self-keeping. He said, "*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*" (1 Cor. 9:27). He wrote Timothy, "...*keep thyself pure*" (1 Tim. 5:22). James addressed dispersed disciples, "*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world*" (Jas. 1:27). How are we doing in this regard? John instructed, "*Little children, keep yourselves from idols*" (1 Jn. 5:21). Jude wrote, "*Keep yourselves in the love of God...*" (Jude 21).

4) MEMORY KEEPERs. It is so important that we not lose our spiritual memory! Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians, "...*ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain*" (1 Cor. 15:2). Peter recognized the importance of memory-keeping. He dedicated his life to keeping memory alive. He stated, "...*I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the*

present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance... Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance" That's what a good minister of Jesus Christ does! (1 Tim. 4:6).

5) UNITY KEEPERS. It is written in God's church letter, "*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3). The Psalmist sang of unity with the refrain, "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Ps. 133:1). Paul besought the church at Corinth, "...*that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" (1 Cor. 1:10). There is a lot of division in this old world. Let's work to keep it out of the church!

6) COMMANDMENT KEEPERS. The need for keeping the commandments of God is as old as man. The first commandments were given by

God to Adam and Eve with the expectation that those commandments be kept (Gen. 2:16-17). Psalm 78:7 expresses the desire of God for His people so well, "*That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.*" Psalm 119 places much emphasis on commandment-keeping: "*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies*" (v. 2). "*Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!*" (vv. 4-5). "*I will keep thy statutes...*" (v. 8). "*Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law...*" (vv. 33-34). "*So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever*" (v. 44). "...*I have said that I would keep thy words*" (v. 57). "*I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy testimonies*" (v. 60). "*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts*" (v. 63). "...*I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart*" (v. 69). "...*so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth*" (v. 88). "*I have refrained my feet from every evil*

way, that I might keep thy word" (v. 101). "...*I will keep thy righteous judgments*" (v. 106). "...*I will keep the commandments of my God*" (v. 115). "*Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them*" (v. 129). "...*so will I keep thy precepts*" (v. 134). "...*I will keep thy statutes...I shall keep thy testimonies*" (vv. 145-146). Such is the "whole duty" of man (Eccl. 12:13). God's commandments for us to keep today are found within the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; Ps. 119:172). Connected with commandment-keeping is the Lord's love (Jn. 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:10). John penned, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous*" (1 Jn. 5:3). "*And this is love, that we walk after his commandments....*" (2 Jn. 6).

We appeal to you to be a keeper!

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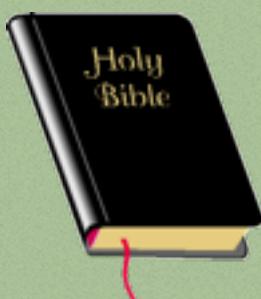
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