

The Believer's Responsibility

Introduction

A. While the Christian has many provisions and gifts he must also be reminded of his responsibilities.

B. There is a close connection between these two concepts. This was borne out in the words of the Lord Jesus, when He said,

For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. . . .
Luke 12:48.

C. The Scripture often makes use of the word "keep" to explain some of the believer's obligations.

I. The Christian is to Keep His Heart, Prov. 4:23.

Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.

Comment: The writer of the Proverbs probably had in mind, when he used the word "heart," the basic priorities and goals of one's life. Each of us have some surface commitments when do not mean much in the guidance of our life – but each of us also have some foundational guidelines which largely determine our thoughts, values, and actions. The message of this verse has to do with protecting this area of life to make sure we are in the will of God – and that we live in harmony with them.

II. The Christian is to Keep the Sayings of the Lord Jesus, John 8:51.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.

Comment: The word "saying," in this verse refers to the teaching of the Savior. In particular, since He refers to "death," the emphasis would be on the message of salvation. He had earlier spoken of the necessity of believing that He was the Old Testament Messiah (V24), and now adds the promise that those who "keep" or accept His teaching will not "see death." The reference here has to do with the judgment that is in death for the non-Christian. The believer may die, but his death is without penalty (I Cor. 15:55).

III. The Christian is to Keep the Commandments of the Savior, John 14:15.

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Comment: By "commandments" the Lord Jesus undoubtedly had in mind, not His general teaching, but those things which He specifically stressed as commands. A good example would be found in the previous chapter – about believers loving one another (13:34,35). Our obedience reveals our love (I John 5:3).

IV. The Christian is to Keep His Body Under, I Cor. 9:27.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to other, I myself should be a castaway (without reward).

Comment: The unusual statement "keep under my body," is Paul's way of referring to the spiritual discipline of his life. He used the word "body" many times before (Romans 6 and 7) to indicate how a person manifests sinful patterns of life. This verse brings before us the responsibility of spiritual control. It is not an emphasis of some form of asceticism. Proverbs 25:28 reminds us of the importance of "taking charge" of our life.

V. The Christian is to Keep Himself Unspotted from the World, James 1:27.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the iFather is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Comment: The word "world," in this verse is referring to non-Christians values, priorities, pleasures, methods, and goals. The believer is not a part of this world-system (John 17:14-16). We are, however, highly vulnerable to the world. Each of us must give heed to the exhortation not to "love the world" (I John 2:15).

VI. The Christian is to Keep Himself from Idols, I John 5:21.

Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Comment: This verse is the concluding thought in John's first Epistle. The exhortation is very fitting. Every believer, in every age, must assume the responsibility of living in harmony with truth, love, and holiness (the three moral attributes of God). When we have conflicting demands, that we allow a place in our life, we have an idol. Only God can have first place.

VII. The Christian is to Keep Himself in the Love of God, Jude 21.

Keep yourself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Comment: This exhortation does not mean that we can merit the love of God! The emphasis is on living in harmony with His love so we can know and experience all the fellowship and benefits that God has for us. A parent may love a child and yet be quite unable to bring to that child the many benefits he had in mind for him. When we learn to live in fellowship with God – we are protected from many of those things which would hinder our walk with God.

Victor M. Matthews