



Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Some Safeguards

Most saints most of the time do not need to learn something new; they need to be reminded of what they already know. Hence it is that the Lord Himself, in working with mankind and with His special peoples, uses and has used memorials. Whether it was the rainbow, the mummy of Joseph, the Passover, or the Lord's Supper, the All Wise has set in motion these types of remembrances so that the lessons once learned will not be forgotten. Likewise, He has enjoined upon His disciples the memorization of scripture, which obviously involves much repetition, and the concomitant

driving into the consciousness of the follower of Christ the teachings and exhortations of scripture. Therefore, also, teachers of the word will go back over the principles and practices of God's word again and again, saying the same things in different ways in hope that some of the doctrine will stick in the minds of some of the students some of the time.

- ◆ **Rejoice!** — Jesus talked about joy during the years of His sojourn upon the surface of this earth. "These things I have spoken to you," the apostle John recorded, "that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John 15:11). One of the highly commended "fruit of the Spirit" is joy. It is clear, then, that the abundant life in Christ is to be one of joy, where saints have learned to look at the things above and not on the things of this earth. "Finally, my brethren," comes the exhortation of Paul to the saints in Philippi, "rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 3:1). Make a decision to have a good time doing what you are doing! Enjoy your activities, and do your work heartily! "To write the same things again," is the apostle's exordium, "is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard to you." When the joy is gone, the saint essentially slogs mindlessly through the routines of Christianity, and ends up a walking corpse. The exhortation to have joy is indeed a safeguard for the soul.

- ◆ **Some "beware"** — Over and over again the scripture talks about the fight for the soul and the challenges for the followers of Christ. "Beware of the dogs," warns Paul, "beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision" (Philippians 3:2). When the apostle warns about the "dogs," he is obviously warning about "dogs" in a spiritual sense rather than the mangy curs which would occasionally bark and snarl along his route of travel. So how does the word of God use the word "dog"? A clue about this terminology comes from God's words to Moses as the children of Israel were preparing to enter the Promised Land: "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute," dictated the Lord, referring to the practice of the women serving as priestesses at the Asherah, "nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute," referring to the way the men who served at the altar of Baal, for example, were used. "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot," continued the righteous God in a parallel construction, "or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 23:17,18). "Dogs" are male homosexuals. The apostle warns about them because the sodomites as a whole have always been aggressively hostile to the preaching of the gospel and the calling of them to repentance. Likewise the Philippian brethren were warned about "the evil workers" — the crooked businessmen who conspire against the gospel of God, the gang leaders and mobsters, the gurus and movers and shakers of false religions. And he warned about the "false circumcision" — the Jews who were hostile to the message of the Messiah.

The whole world really does lie in the power of the evil one, as the apostle John had noted. The apostle Paul, therefore, concerned about the eternities of the Philippian brethren, encouraged them to have great attitudes, and to be aware of the evils around them, that he might do his part to safeguard their souls.

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