

**Deuteronomy 11:18-21, 26-28**

18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 20 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— 27 the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; 28 the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. – NIV

**Prayer of the Day:**

O God, you rule over all things in wisdom and kindness. Take away everything that may be harmful and give us whatever is good; through your son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

**Verse of the Day:**

Alleluia. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. Alleluia. (Psalm 119:105)

**Sermon:**

Have you ever heard of “tefillin” how about “tzitzit”? I promise, I’m not just making words up. Instead, these are items you can still find in the practicing Jewish community today. In fact, you can order them online. Tefillin or a phylactery is a small leather box fixed to a strap which is then worn upon the head and the forearm or hand of Jewish men during morning prayer. Tzitzit or tassels, ritually tied, can still be found upon the four corners of the Jewish tallit, one of the more prominent being the tallit gadol or prayer shawl.

Why am I giving you a lesson in Orthodox Jewish religious terminology today? Because the words of our lesson constitute one of the four passages you find in the tefillin or phylactery and helped form the practice as Jewish people took the words of our lesson about as literally as one could and actually began to bind the Word of God on their hearts and hands and heads. *18 Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* Yes, as God speaks to His Old Testament people, He wants them and all of us, to **KEEP HIS WORD CLOSE!** May we **STUDY IT ... SHARE IT ... LIVE IT!**

You see, the Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws were all meant to be vivid pictures of the coming reality that would be found in Christ as Paul tells the Colossians (cf. Colossians 2:17). Spend some time reading through the Book of Hebrews to see a beautiful explanation of all of this. So Jesus will even chastise the Pharisees later saying, *“Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues”* (Matthew 23:5). Israel’s leaders got hung up on the picture and the seen thing and missed the greater point.

However, I don’t think the greater point is so very hard to see here. Again, Moses urges the people, *Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates ...* It’s clearly not about how fancy the little box is that I tie to my forehead, or for that matter if I tie a tefillin to my head at all but rather that the Word of God should fill my head, and my heart, and, yes, be ever in my hand as I live my everyday life. That only happens if we actually crack open the book and apply it to ourselves first and foremost.

Where does the Law of my God convict me of sin? Where have I treated God and His Word like a little more than a trinket to be worn for show or to feign importance or puff up my pride? Where have I

hypocritically paraded God's Word around that others might "eww and ahh" while privately I never took it out of the little box for fear that it might prick my conscience?

Ah, but then do I once more here the sweet tones of the gospel soothing my conscience and promising the forgiveness a sinner such as I so desperately craves? Jesus and His righteousness handed over to me filling my heart and mind with words sweeter than any honey granting the perfection God demands. Christ's holy precious blood scrubbing away the stain of sin, forgiving it in the perfect sacrifice offered on cross. His resurrection proof, sign, seal that even a sinner like you, a sinner like me can be given the paradise of heaven by grace through faith as the Spirit wings it all into our hearts through the powerful Word of our God.

But then notice too how naturally the next thing happens. As I study God's Word, I share it. It begins at home. Notice that God puts the responsibility upon the Mother and Father and the statistics bear this out. In families where mom and dad take an active role in the faith lives of their children, (no, this is not them paying for every youth group trip to six flags but actually sitting down with their kids and actively discussing the Word of God Studying it together in the home) where this occurs children are dramatically more likely to take God's Word seriously and remain in it into adulthood. It's not hard to figure out why. Faith was modeled for them everyday and they figured out that God was important. Of course, the opposite can just as easily be true as it says at the end of our lessons then blessings are replaced by curses and sad to say it, but I believe we are seeing that fruit in our world today when parents abdicate their responsibility a different model is presented and the child all too easily learns that God is not important in the home so why should He be important later in life?

Now begin to apply that on a larger scale. When the people of our world look at us as God's people, what do they see? Are we holding Christ out as we present a model worth following?

I suppose that brings us to the final part of the sermon today. God's people will live His Word in their everyday lives. The Word studied becomes the Word talked about, the Word talked about becomes the Word lived. I often find myself wondering about this one. How well is the visible church today living the truths of God's Word in the world around us? I think it's hard anymore to do it. To really live the principles God sets forth in His Word. Walk down the avenue of the 10 commandments and see how well we do. Don't just look at the store fronts either as you pass by but stop and take a look inside. Honor and respect authority, a truth Paul told the Romans applied to them even when Rome was actively persecuting the fledgling faith growing there. Don't murder, not only in action but in mind and heart as hatred is harbored for reasons too numerous to count these days. Honor marriage as God gave it, what goes on in the light of day is enough to make one blush and Christians are shamed all too easily into silence, even acceptance. Personal property is a blessing God assigns and which I have no right to reassign no matter how righteous I think my cause may be. My tongue can cause wounds which run deeper than any knife but it can also build relationships stronger than steel and wing God's Word and Spirit into the lives of others and of course it all starts in the heart, in the mind, where God and His Word would be King and not my own selfish wants and needs. So over the final seven always sit the first three reminding me of God, His name, His Word which reign supreme. Does this perfectly describe us? It doesn't me. So is it any wonder that the world struggles with it, when the model they should be learning from is often flawed?

Ah, dear friends, whether in my interactions with family, the world around me or with my God, it's time to run back to the Word. When sin is laid bare and the curses it has earned stare me at me on my hypocrisy, I have a sin bearer. One who became a curse for me that the blessings might be mine and when I see Christ and His cross again, study it anew, well, I have something to talk about with others who desperately need it today. I have something worth striving to live in my everyday life. No wonder God comes to His people of the Old Testament and New and would urge us to **KEEP HIS WORD CLOSE!**

The words of the old prayer keep going through my head as I contemplate all this. Perhaps it's the best way to wrap it up today. We pray, "Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen."