

## Everybody Needs to be S.A.F.E.

It dawned on me the other day the number of times I have heard others say “Stay safe” or some variation of those words. Due to the COVID everyone talks about safety, social distancing, and quarantining. With over 60,00 people dead and thousands upon thousands being hospitalized we understand there is a real danger out there. The same applies to us spiritually. “Exercise self-control, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, like a roaring lion, is prowling about, eager to devour you.” (1 Peter 5:8 TCNT). The devil is real, he is active, and he is a prowler seeking to devour. Therefore, we need to be SAFE.

**Sanctified** and sanctification mean to be set apart, cleansed and be made holy. The Levitical priesthood were selected by God but they also had to be “sanctified” or made pure and holy. Re-occurring words in Leviticus are “be holy for I Am Holy.” “So, you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.” (Exodus 28:41). To become a Christian one must become sanctified, made holy and pure. How is this done? “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” (John 17:17) It is through the Gospel of Christ we are instructed into holiness. One cannot become a Christian without the Gospel. We must be washed in the blood of Christ in order to be sanctified. “Therefore. Jesus also, that **He might sanctify the people with His own blood**, suffered outside the gate.” (Hebrews 13:12, emphasis mine, D.T.) It in baptism our sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. As Ananias told Paul in his conversion, “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

**Alert** is being on guard and vigilant. One of the dangers of going out in public is letting down our guard and contacting the virus. We might get in a hurry, get too close to a carrier or touch a contaminated surface and then our face. Christians are told to be alert. “**Watch**, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13 some translations have be alert instead of watch,

D.T.) Danger is always around the corner. When will we be tempted to do wrong? No one knows. Temptation does not come with advance warning. Did King David know he was going to see a naked woman bathing when he walked out on the rooftop? I doubt seriously David was a peeping Tom and hoping to find temptation. But he found it and gave in to it. We must be on guard against our own lusts and evil desires. "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly." (Luke 21:34). It is hard to be constantly zealous and on guard but we must remember the danger we constantly face.

**Faith** and faithfulness are essential in being safe. Being safe from the virus means doing the right thing all the time, not just when we feel like it. Such is true spiritually. Our faith must be grounded upon the word of God. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17). Bible faith is not hunch or a mere feeling we get but is learned. We learn and accept who God is, who Jesus is, and what they command us to do. Faithfulness means being constant in our obedience to God and His word. Would you consider your car "faithful" if it started 80% of the time? How would you react if your spouse is faithful to you 90% of the time? I don't think any of us would be happy with either situation for neither is really faithful. So, it is with our God. Faithfulness is always seeking to do God's will and result in us being safe.

**Examination**, as in self-examination, is the final part of being safe. I really can't make anyone practice social distancing or make them wear a mask but I can do the things myself. One passage which speaks of such is Matthew 7, 1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. 3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? 4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? 5 "Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." This passage

is often misused, misunderstood, and misapplied. It does not forbid all judging but it does demand we start with ourselves. One problem with hypocrisy is it misleads the hypocrite. They think of themselves not needing self-examination and therefore have sin in their lives. One of my favorite passages on this topic is 2 Corinthians 13.5, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified." The action required is to examine oneself; the standard is being in the faith (the word of God); proof of passing the test is Jesus being in us (His words, His example, His obedience); not passing the test is being disqualified. Having the right standard is essential but so is self-examination.

My final thought on this point is addressed in James 1, "22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." The Bible is God's mirror for our soul. By looking in the mirror we can see what God sees. We can then make corrections in our lives and be pleasing to God. But a person who looks and remains the same is the forgetful person who will be condemned by Him.

By doing the above things one can and indeed should be safe. – Dennis Tucker