

Deuteronomy 11:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Analysis

The remedy: 'lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul.' The Hebrew sum (מִשְׁׁמָר, 'place, set, establish') indicates intentional, permanent placement. God's words must be internalized, not merely heard. The command continues: 'bind them for a sign upon your hand' and 'frontlets between your eyes.' This produced the Jewish practice of tefillin (phylacteries)—leather boxes containing Scripture worn during prayer. While the command may be partly figurative (meaning constant mindfulness), Jewish tradition took it literally. The point: Scripture should govern actions (hand) and thoughts (eyes/mind).

Historical Context

This command repeats Deuteronomy 6:8, establishing the practice of Scripture memorization and display. Exodus 13:9, 16 first introduced this concept regarding Passover remembrance. Post-exilic Judaism developed elaborate tefillin practices. Jesus criticized Pharisees who made ostentatious phylacteries while neglecting Scripture's heart (Matthew 23:5). True obedience internalizes God's word.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'lay up' God's words in your heart versus merely reading or hearing them?
2. How can Christians practice the spirit of this command (Scripture permeating thought and action) today?
3. What is the danger of external religious observance without internal transformation?

Interlinear Text

וְשִׁמְמָמָם	אֶת	דְּבָרִים	עַל	אֵלֶּה	לְבָבֶךָ	מִ	עַל	לְבָבֶךָ	מִ	עַל	לְבָבֶךָ	מִ	
Therefore shall ye lay up	H853	these my words	H428	H5921	in your heart	H3824							H5921
H7760		H1697			H3824								
and in your soul	H5315	and bind	H853	H226	them for a sign	H5921	upon your hand	H3027					
		H7194			H226								
that they may be as frontlets	H1961	H2903	H996	H5869	between your eyes								

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:16 (Word): Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Proverbs 3:1 (Word): My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

Psalms 119:11 (Word): Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

2 Peter 1:12 (Parallel theme): Wherefore 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.

Exodus 13:9 (Word): And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 32:46 (Word): And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

Hebrews 2:1 (Parallel theme): Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Exodus 13:16 (Parallel theme): And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.