



Keep Within the Compass

English Painter Robert Dighton, 1784

In Freemasonry the compass represents boundaries and wisdom of conduct reminding us to always have the strength to *“circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds”* - which simply translated means to not fall into the trappings of greed and excess in our behavior.

Within the circle appears the expression, *“Keep within compass and you will be sure to avoid many troubles which others endure,”* a turn of a phrase very familiar to all Freemasons. The man under the compasses is presumably a Mason, who living within the boundaries of the compass is shown with a plentiful harvest and land representing a productive life. Outside the circle in each corner of the painting the artist portrays drunkenness, debauchery, a ship wreck and people imprisoned representing the consequences of a life in which a man does not circumscribe his desires and keep his passions within due bounds.