

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

June 4, 2017

Lip Service

by Frank Himmel

God indicted the Jews of Isaiah's day with drawing near to Him with words and honoring Him with their lips, but removing their hearts far from Him (Isaiah 29:13). "Lip service" is a claim that goes no further than verbal expression. In other words, our lips say one thing, our actions say something else.

Think about a few Bible principles. We profess them. Do we practice them?

The gospel is God's power to save (Romans 1:16). Yet some act as if it has no drawing power. They insist on offering all sorts of artificial incentives to get people to come to church: food, fun, door prizes, gifts, trips—you name it. If we believe in the power of the gospel, we will let it shine, uncluttered by our come-ons.

The Scriptures are all-sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17). They meet every need of man, thoroughly furnishing him for every good work God intended. Why, then, do some add human creeds or catechisms? Why have thousands joined churches based on "later revelations"? Why do increasing numbers of churches and preachers insist that God is continuing to reveal His will directly

to and through them? Why does so much preaching contain so little Bible? If we believe that the Scriptures make us perfect or complete, we will let them be our exclusive guide.

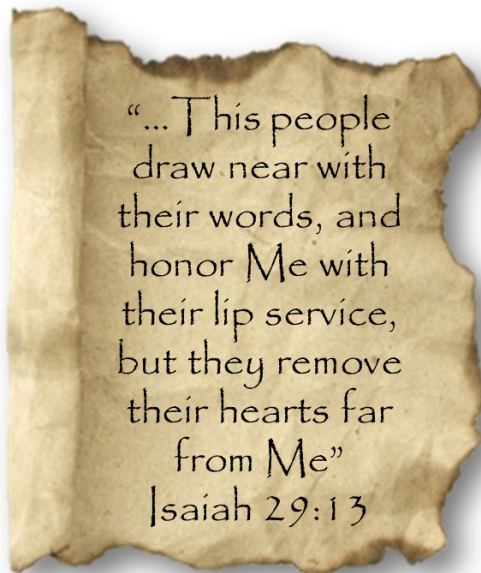
The church is all-sufficient (Ephesians 4:11-16). Christ equipped His church to do its work. Yet some argue that we cannot take the gospel to the whole world without forming a variety of auxiliary

organizations: missionary societies, worldwide radio and television cooperatives, sponsoring church arrangements, etc. In the area of benevolence, we are told that we must build institutions (called "homes") for orphans, widows, seniors, and others; otherwise, their needs will not be met.

How do you suppose the first-century churches got the job done without all these things? They are not only unnecessary, they are unauthorized additions to God's

plan. If we believe in the all-sufficiency of the church, we will not attach human institutions of any kind to it. We will not add to its God-given functions. Each of us will work according to our ability.

Local churches are self-governing and independent (Acts 14:23). Each has the same organization: elders to oversee it. That oversight is limited to one church, "the flock among you" (1 Peter 5:2). Yet many want ▶



“...This people
draw near with
their words, and
honor Me with
their lip service,
but they remove
their hearts far
from Me”
Isaiah 29:13

to tie churches together under a central leadership. The elders of one church plan and oversee the work (at least a part of it) of several others, reducing them to little more than fund-raisers. In the so-called “mission church,” the elders of one flock completely take over another.

Some of us who would not go that far still may not adequately respect this principle. We insist on passing judgment on every matter of judgment in other churches around town. If we believe in independent churches, we will tend to our own business and do our own work.

1

God comes first (Matthew 6:33). Loving Him with our whole heart is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:36-37). We say it and sing it, but do we practice it? What do our calendars say? What about those Sundays when the kids have a ball game or when we are on vacation—does He come first those Sundays? What do our checkbooks say? Does He come first in finances or is He somewhere down the list, perhaps even beneath what we spend on recreation? What do our closets say? Do our wardrobes reflect godliness or worldliness?

In the Apostle’s words, “Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth” (1 John 3:18). ■

Live Your Convictions



by Frank Himmel

“The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy [blessed] is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves” (Romans 14:22).

A popular axiom says, “Let your conscience be your guide.” That is not always sufficient. Conscience is the mental faculty that judges our conduct in light of what we know to be right. If that knowledge is incorrect, conscience judges by the wrong standard and may approve what is nevertheless wrong.

This passage, nevertheless, stresses the importance of living by our convictions. The next verse adds, “Whatever is not from faith is sin.” *Faith*, in this setting, is trust that what we are doing is right. To be blessed we must show respect for truth and right by living the standard we know.

If we doubt a thing is right, we must abstain. Why? We cannot participate from faith, and that means to go forward is sin, regardless of the inherent rightness or wrongness of the conduct in question. In plain terms, “err on the side of caution.” “If in doubt, don’t do it.” ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Bruce Williams	John Baucom	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Bruce Williams	Mark Clifton
OPENING PRAYER	Steven Turner	Gary Hagler	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Bruce Hollander	Bruce Hollander	
CUP	John Baucom	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Ray Moore		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Greg Winget
CLOSING PRAYER	Kerry Gray	Josh Baucom	Daven Daniel