

PathLights

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

March 10, 2019

Keeping Records

by Frank Himmel

In most marriages either the husband or the wife is the designated bookkeeper.

At our house that is my job, and I keep fairly detailed records. It helps us stay on budget, "live within our means," and keeps things running smoothly. Having just completed last year's taxes brings this subject to mind.

The Bible has some things to say about keeping records.

Records of Wrongs

Some people keep detailed records of others' wrongs. The Bible condemns that. Love "does not take into account a wrong suffered" (1 Corinthians 13:5); "it keeps no record of wrongs" (NIV). Some translations say love is "not resentful"; that is the outcome of keeping records of wrongs.

Jesus cautioned that we must learn to be forgiving; otherwise, God will not forgive us (Matthew 6:15). In the same sermon He also warned against the fault-finding spirit, the one that so readily sees others' wrongs while blind to our own (7:1-5).



Records of Rights

The Lord also addressed another problematic kind of recordkeeping: too much attention to our own good deeds. Not only must we refrain from broadcasting such acts to others (Matthew 6:1-2), Jesus added, "But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" (vv. 3-4). In other words, do not even announce it to yourself. The danger is pride and self-righteousness.

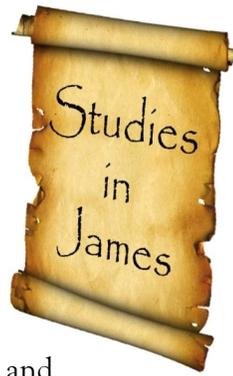
Another problem with too much focus on the good we have done is complacency about current and future opportunities. Commenting about his service to Christ, Paul wrote, "Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). If Paul needed to keep on working despite what he had already done, so do we!

Records of Everything

The Bible sometimes depicts God as a bookkeeper. His records are all-inclusive (Ecclesiastes 12:14)! Fortunately, He has a big eraser. Jesus died for our sins. When we put our faith in Him it is "credited" unto righteousness (Romans 4:1-8); that is, faith is the condition upon which God will forgive or erase the sin. "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away..." (Acts 3:19). Is your name written in the Lamb's book of life? ■

Worthless Religion

by Frank Himmel



Interestingly, the Bible seldom uses the words *religion* and *religious*. One's *religion* is his beliefs and practices, particularly as they relate to God. When we describe a person as *religious* we generally mean he is pious, devout, or godly. In common usage, *religious* is occasionally a synonym for dedication or faithfulness: for example, one is religious about his diet or exercise—or not!

James observed, “If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is worthless” (1:26). He makes two vital points.

First, our religion may be worthless. While that may be bluntly stated, it is too often precisely the case.

One’s religion is worthless if he believes things that are not true. The Athenians were “very religious in all respects” (Acts 17:22), but they were idolaters who worshiped in ignorance (v. 23). They needed to repent (v. 30). Some of the Corinthian Christians had come to deny there is such a thing as resurrection from the dead. Paul reasoned that if that were so their faith would be vain and useless (1 Corinthians 15:12-17).

The Bible puts a premium on truth. We are sanctified in the truth (John 17:17). The truth makes us free (John 8:32). We must therefore constantly verify that what we believe is what God’s word teaches.

James, however, focuses on another cause of worthless religion: too little application of the truth. It does us no good to believe the truth if we do not apply it. And the application James has in mind is not to church participation or worship—things we typically associate with religion—as important as those are. Just as the Old Testament prophets frequently did, James points to one’s daily walk as the oft-missing application of his religion. James uses speech as an example. A man who speaks angrily or bitterly, who lies, who gossips, who slanders, who constantly complains or criticizes, who uses profanity, or who otherwise fails to bridle his tongue, is a man with worthless religion, no matter how often or zealously he prays or sings hymns. Obviously, that same principle applies to other areas of conduct as well.

The second vital point our text makes is the danger of self-deception. If the Pharisees could pray long prayers while devouring widows’ houses (Mark 12:40), we, too, might convince ourselves that we have sufficient religion, based on a few observances. Worship must not be undervalued, yet it must always be counter-balanced by godly living. Micah summarized (6:8):

He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God? ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Bruce Williams	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Clifton Lefort	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Carlos Garcia	
CUP	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Jason Chandler	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Adam Wilson
CLOSING PRAYER	J B Williams	Stachys McLeod