



PathLights

“Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path”
Psalm 119:104

December 9, 2018

God’s Unalterable Word

by Frank Himmel



The author of Hebrews described God’s word as “unalterable” (2:2). The term he used means stable, firm, or sure. Elsewhere in the book he used it of holding our hope *firm* until the end (3:6, 14), of our hope being an anchor that is *steadfast* (6:19), and of a testament that is *in force* (9:17).

It is good for us to remember the surety of what God has spoken. Too often, what man presents as fact later proves to be not true at all. And just as frequently, much of what men promise to do somehow never seems to occur. This was Peter’s point when he quoted Isaiah 40: “All flesh is like grass, and its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Peter 1:24-25). Peter said that enduring word is the word which was preached to us.

The author of Hebrews, however, was thinking about more than facts

and promises when he described God’s word as steadfast or unalterable; He was also thinking about God’s instructions.

The opening line of thought in Hebrews is simple. God has now spoken to us by His Son (1:1-4). His Son is superior to angels (1:5-14). That being the case, if the word God spoke through angels (the Law of Moses) proved sure/steadfast, how much more is the word spoken through the greater spokesman (2:1-4)! If every disobedience of the Law of Moses was punished, how will those escape who neglect what the Son says?

Notice the term *neglect* (v. 3). Obviously, those who ignore the Son’s message altogether are negligent, but the author was not addressing these. He was writing to Christians who were doing too little to maintain their relationship with Christ. Faithful lives do not run on autopilot. They require constant nurturing and careful monitoring. That is why the author cautioned, “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard” (v. 1). We must never become nonchalant about spiritual matters!

It is noteworthy that the Son’s message is summarized by the word *salvation* (v. 3). What Jesus revealed is not merely a newer, better law to replace the Law of Moses. It is the word of salvation—salvation by faith in the Son who died for us, in whom we have forgiveness by God’s grace. Nevertheless, the Son’s word does in practicality constitute a law for us (1 Corinthians 9:21), and the Hebrews writer notes that “He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal ▶

salvation” (5:9). Throughout the Bible, obedience is the expression of saving faith. We are self-deceived if we think we can follow the Son without doing what He says.

Moses understood the unalterable nature of God’s instructions. He warned the Israelites not to tamper with them. “You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). Again, how much truer must that be of the Son’s word!

If the New Testament tells us to do something—be it a condition of salvation, a worship requirement, a moral responsibility, or whatever—we dare not ignore it. Conversely, if the New Testament prohibits something—again, in any realm—there is no rationale that makes it acceptable. *Drifting* (v. 1) is the danger. That occurs one step at a time, and it often begins with a casual view of God’s instructions.

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (Hebrews 2:14). ■

Freedom

by Frank Himmel

Too often, people have the idea that being “free” means being at liberty to do whatever they want. Surely you can see that if that were so, no one would have any freedom; life would be utter chaos.

James spoke of God’s word as “the law of liberty” (1:25). That phrase indicates that God’s law provides freedom in some sense. It also suggests that freedom is bound by law, a principle that is true in all realms, not just the spiritual one.

We live in a country where freedom abounds. For example, I am free to go into any supermarket I choose and gather up a basket full of whatever groceries I prefer. I am not, however, free to take them home without paying for them; criminal law precludes that. And if week after week my cart is full of junk food, my body will suffer the consequences; physiological laws dictate that.

Freedom, both in the civil and religious realms, is not only misunderstood, at times it is misused. “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God” (1 Peter 2:16). ■



Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Howard Moore	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Clifton Lefort	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Greg Winget	
CUP	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Josh Baucom	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Adam Gibson
CLOSING PRAYER	David Gray	Daven Daniel