

# PathLights

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

January 20, 2019

## Motives for Obedience

by Frank Himmel

The Bible does not record God's commands in a lifeless list; they are interspersed throughout explanations of His marvelous plan for us. Sprinkled in among these instructions are motives for our obedience. Have you ever noticed how common they are? Consider one example, Ephesians 6:1-9, a paragraph addressed to children and slaves.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, **for this is right**" (v. 1). Most of us have a sense of right and wrong, albeit not always exactly in keeping with God's standard. God is always right. As long as we obey Him, we are right. Regardless of any other consideration, we ought to do what God says, for this is right.

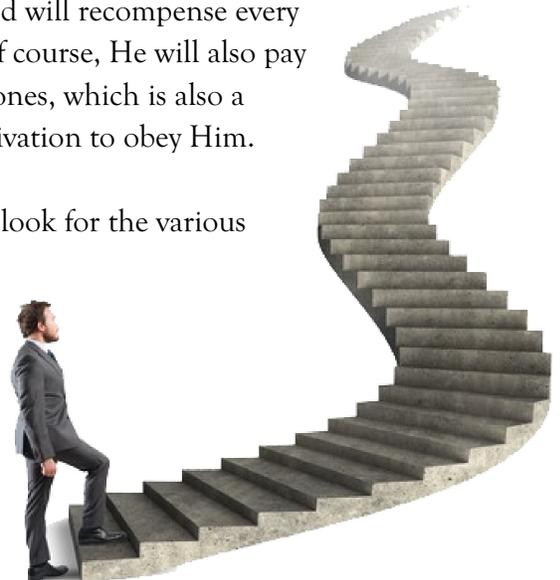
"Honor your father... **that it may be well with you,** and that you may live long on the earth" (vv. 2-3). Paul noted that this was a commandment with a promise. This particular promise is not absolute, but generally speaking it holds true. And it makes a good point. Some suggest that our choice is either sin and enjoy life now or obey God and benefit later. Not so. Godliness holds promise for the present life as well as the life to come (1 Timothy 4:8). Although we may have a hard time seeing it in some specific application, the Lord's commands are always for our good (Deuteronomy 6:24).

"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters... **as slaves of Christ**" (vv. 5-6). We *are* slaves of Christ, you know. He bought us with His blood. Belonging to him, forever indebted to Him, we are obligated to do His will. "For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

"**With good will** render service..." (v. 7). The summary obligation we have toward others is to love our neighbor as ourselves. And what is the loving thing to do? Whatever God commands! Paul said all the commands are summed up in this one (Romans 12:9). If you want to do good to others, to be a blessing, God's commands are the only way to go.

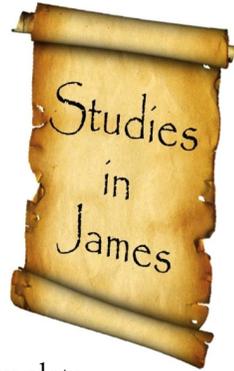
"...knowing that whatever good thing each one does, **this he will receive back from the Lord,** whether slave or free" (v. 8). It is both comforting and motivating to know that God will recompense every good deed. Of course, He will also pay back the evil ones, which is also a powerful motivation to obey Him.

As you study, look for the various motives embedded among God's commands. They are there to help us. ■



# Pray for Wisdom

by Frank Himmel



James's opening declaration is that trials are a blessing. They produce endurance, making us complete, lacking in nothing. But what if we lack sufficient perspective to see a trial as a blessing? Ask for it! "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (1:5a).

Isn't that asking a lot? Perhaps...but not enough to be a problem. "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (v. 5).

Parents sometimes respond to a child's request with a rebuke: "You are always asking for *something*," "What makes you think you need *that?*," "When are you going to start standing on your own two feet?," etc. That is not God's disposition. He is anxious to give.

The variable is not God's disposition; it is ours. Do we fully trust our heavenly Father?

But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways (vv. 6-8).

It is a common saying that a hog is good for nothing while he is alive. He cannot be ridden like a horse. He cannot pull a cart like an ox. He does not provide clothing like a sheep or milk like a cow. He will not guard the house like a dog. A hog is good only for the slaughter.

So it is with a greedy man. Just like a hog, he does no good with his wealth while he is alive. Only when he dies might some good come from what he had.

Hmm...perhaps it was fitting that older "piggy banks" had to be broken to access their contents!



The Bible teaches us to pray according to God's will (1 John 5:14). We do not always know His will in the sense of the best way for a troublesome situation to resolve. Our view of that may be much different than His! We can, however, be confident about how He wants us to view such circumstances and how He wants us to conduct ourselves in them; and we can pray with complete confidence for His wisdom to help us do both those things.

James does not instruct us to pray for the removal of our trials but for the wisdom to make them all they can be. That takes faith. It also increases faith. ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Greg Winget	Bruce Williams
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Clifton Lefort	
CUP	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Jason Chandler	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Howard Moore
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Adam Wilson