

PathLights

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

December 3, 2017

Self-justification

by Frank Himmel

"You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

In this condemnation of the Pharisees, Jesus acknowledged three truths about self-justification which apply to all of us.



1) We have a tendency to try to justify ourselves.

Be honest. Isn't your initial reaction to make a defense when you are

confronted by some criticism or accusation? We try to "get off the hook" by explaining that we didn't do it or it wasn't our fault or it really wasn't such a big thing.

This behavior is as old as man. Adam blamed Eve for his sin, and Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). Abraham argued that there was an element of truth in his lie about Sarah being his sister (Genesis 20:12). King Saul appealed to good intentions in an effort to excuse his disobedience in sparing Agag and his flocks (1 Samuel 15:15). Aaron essentially said of the golden calf, "It just happened!" (Exodus 32:24).

2) Our self-justification is often accepted by men.

Examples in our society are legion. Profanity among

coaches is acceptable because it motivates players. Explicit sex scenes in movies are just another way to communicate the message (a prominent director explained it that way). Gambling is okay when the proceeds go to a good cause. And then there are the popular "scientific" explanations that drunkenness, homosexuality, bad tempers and the like are due to genetic causes.

Christians are not immune in this matter. Some churches have pretty well given up withdrawing from the disorderly because "it doesn't work." As divorce rates have risen, so has our acceptance of expanding justifications for them. The fact that so few are interested any more consoles us about our lack of evangelism. And there are all sorts of reasons why we cannot make it to some of the worship assemblies.

3) God sees through it all. The Pharisees doubtless congratulated each other on their righteousness. Perhaps the general populace regarded them with esteem. But God knew better. In their case and ours, both conduct and explanations of it which may be highly regarded by men are often detestable to God.

God's character, not popular opinion, is the standard that determines righteousness. "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). And He sees our hearts. While we may be able to deceive others and even ourselves about our motives, God knows. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13). ■

Learned Attitudes

by Frank Himmel

Paul was in prison when he wrote Philippians. Among other purposes, that letter was the Apostle’s thank you note to the brethren at Philippi for sending him some financial support as well as offering the personal services of one of their members, a man named Epaphroditus.

While thanking them for their help, Paul added, “Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am” (4:11). What Paul had learned was to focus on the Lord and rely on Him (vv. 12-13).

If Paul could learn contentment, if he could train himself to maintain that attitude regardless of his circumstances, we can, too. And going hand-in-hand with learning contentment, let’s learn. . .

Patience

Patience is the ability to wait with a good attitude (constant complaining while you wait is *not* patience!). We can learn patience by reminding ourselves that the delay we face is a relatively minor inconvenience, that others may just be slower than we are, that our need is not everyone else’s top priority, and that there are times when others—including God—are waiting on us. “So,

as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of . . . patience” (Colossians 3:12).

Happiness

Happiness is a matter of choice. It is clearly not determined merely by material wealth; some with little are quite happy while some with much are miserable. Happiness, like contentment, is the choice to make the best of your circumstances; to not allow adversity to invade your heart and take away your satisfaction.

You will need to “count your blessings.” Praying with thanksgiving will assist with that. It will likely be helpful for you to turn off constantly negative voices such as newscasts or whiney social media posters. You may even have to distance yourself a bit from frequently complaining brethren or family members. “Rejoice in the Lord

always; again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Kindness

Kindness is another attitude we can work on. Some are naturally warmer and more expressive than others, but any of us can move past being a grouch! Do not imitate the rudeness that has become so commonplace in our society. Think before you speak or act. Go a step beyond: do something nice for someone you are at odds with. It will do wonders toward mending the relationship. “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). ■



Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Mark Clifton	Bruce Williams
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	Bruce Williams	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Mark Clifton	Jason Chandler	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	Adam Gibson	Adam Gibson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	John Baucom		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Carlos Garcia
CLOSING PRAYER	Bruce Williams	Chris Brooks	Albert Lee Harrison