



PathLights

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

November 25, 2018

Rejoice!

by Frank Himmel

Have you every paid attention to how much joy the early Christians felt?

Luke says the very first Christians, those at Jerusalem, "were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people..." (Acts 2:46-47).

When Philip preached the gospel at Samaria and confirmed it with miraculous signs, "there was much rejoicing in that city" (Acts 8:8).

When the Ethiopian was baptized, "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).

When Barnabas came to Antioch and saw how many had turned to the Lord, "he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord" (Acts 11:23).

Describing the gospel's effect at Antioch of Pisidia, Luke says, "And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 14:52).

When Paul and Silas were traveling from Antioch of Syria to Jerusalem, "they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren" (Acts 15:3).

The Philippian jailer was baptized in the middle of the night. He "rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household" (Acts 16:34).

These people were full of joy—and it showed! They were excited because they had learned the truth that Jesus died for them and then rose from the dead to be their Lord; they no longer had to live in ignorance and sin. They were excited because in Christ their sins were forgiven; they had a fresh start. They were excited because in Christ they now had a new, better life, with access to all spiritual blessings, including the hope of heaven. They were excited because they had become part of God's family, sharing together with others of like faith, now united with some whom they formerly may have viewed as enemies.

These Christians were by no means problem-free. They still faced life's daily challenges. Many were poor; some were so poor that others had to help provide their daily needs. Some of them were sick. They still aged, and they and their families still had to deal with death. The fact that these people became Christians brought at least one additional problem: opposition—at times, intense opposition. Even then, they rejoiced. When the Apostles were flogged for preaching Jesus, "they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41).

Do our lives reflect this joy? Can others see it in us? If not, we need to recapture the value of God's grace in Christ and refresh our perspective. ■

“He Was Heard”

by Frank Himmel

The author of Hebrews says of Jesus, “In the days of His flesh, He offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety” (Hebrews 5:7).

This is a reference to Jesus’ experience in Gethsemane the night before His crucifixion. Jesus prayed three times—intensely—that the Father would remove the cup He was about to drink, the suffering He was about to undergo.



Our text says, “He was heard.” Jesus’ experience that night teaches us several important lessons.

First, Jesus was heard because of His piety, His “godly fear” (NKJV). While Jesus prayed for what He, as a man, desired, He did so with a disposition to submit to whatever the Father’s will was. “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will” (Mark 14:36).

When we pray, we must pray with confidence in the Father’s wisdom as well as His power. Our perspective is limited. Just as a parent knows better than a child, our heavenly Father knows far better than we what is

best. We must pray with a heart that is ready to accept whatever the Father’s will is.

Second, though Jesus was heard, the Father’s answer was no. Too often people view a prayer as “heard” only when the answer is yes, when the thing prayed for comes to pass just as the petitioner wished.

The Father said no to Jesus’ request that He not have to drink the cup. At the same time, the Father said yes to Jesus’ request that the Father’s will be carried out. That teaches us that “heard” prayer is not necessarily granting the specific petition we have in mind, that which we assume is the best way to an end; it is, instead, granting what will most effectively accomplish God’s greater purpose. Jesus’ suffering, as difficult as it was for Him, brought infinitely greater blessings, both to Himself and to others, than the immediate relief of avoiding His crucifixion ordeal.

Third, while the Father did not grant Jesus’ immediate desire, He did do what He could that was consistent with His will. He sent help. “Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43). The Father did not take away the burden; instead, He strengthened the bearer. Surely that is as great an indication of “heard” prayer as granting the actual petition would have been.

May we grow in our understanding, and in our use, of the marvelous blessing of prayer. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Chris Brooks	Josh Baucom
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Ian Brown
OPENING PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Mike Zachry	
CUP	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Kerry Gray	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	J B Williams	Bruce Williams