



# PathLights

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

March 3, 2019

## Misconceptions About Faith

by Frank Himmel

Faith is essential to pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). Unfortunately, faith is often misunderstood or misrepresented. Consider a few misconceptions about it.

**Faith is a blind leap.** Mark Twain famously said, "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." Not all would go that far, yet it is common to hear of "the leap of faith." Biblical faith, however, is anything but a blind leap. It is a conviction about and a trust in facts substantiated by evidence. "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

**Faith comes mysteriously.** Some say you just have it. Doubtless that describes many people's beliefs, but it is not the basis of Biblical faith. Others say God imparts faith to us directly, but they never can explain how God could be displeased with those who don't have it because He never gave it to them. The Bible simply explains, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

**One faith is as good as another.** The Bible uses the term *faith* both of what we believe (often called "the

faith") and our belief itself. Certainly not all levels of believing are equal: there is worthless faith, dead faith, shipwrecked faith, etc. Likewise, not everything believed is equally valid either. The Bible says there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). It cautions against falling away (1 Timothy 4:1) or wandering away (1 Timothy 6:10) from the faith.

**We are saved by faith only.** Article IX of the Methodist Discipline says, "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." In contrast, the Bible says, "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 3:24). It is what Paul called "the obedience of faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

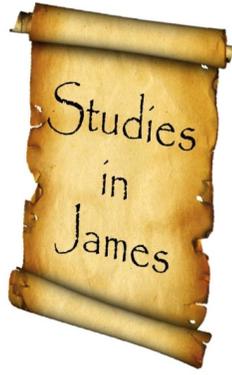
**We are saved at the point of faith.** As Billy Graham expressed it, "All you have to do to be born again is to repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior" (*How to Be Born Again* 156). The Apostle Peter, however, preaching by inspiration, told those who believed when he preached the gospel to them—

"they were pierced to the heart"—"Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38a). ■



# Doers of the Word

by Frank Himmel



Having told us how to listen to God’s word—humbly, sincerely, patiently, thoughtfully, etc.—James proceeds to the obvious next step, without which even the best listening is useless.

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” (1:22). God does not speak to satisfy our curiosity. He intends for His word to fill our hearts and direct our lives.

In his typical homey manner, James emphasizes the point with a simple illustration.

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But he who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does (1:23-25).

The comparison begins with two mirrors. As a bedroom mirror reflects our physical image, so God’s word shows us what we look like spiritually. James

might be contrasting two looks since he uses different words for each, yet both words indicate something more than a casual glance. The main contrast is in the result of looking.

In either case, a man who looks in a mirror and sees changes that need to be made but does nothing about them has wasted his time. He immediately forgets, either because he just doesn’t care or he gets busy with something else. The profitable look is the one that changes things, that results in doing. It is the look of one who abides by or lives by what he sees. Notice that James says, “This man will be blessed by what he does,” not by what he reads or hears. The richest blessing of God’s word comes in its application. Only then is Bible reading or Bible preaching complete.

One more thing. The “word” that James has in view as our spiritual mirror is “the word of truth” (v. 18), the word which when implanted “is able to save your souls” (v. 21). That is the gospel. Now James calls that word “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (v. 25). It is perfect because God’s revelation was completed in Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2), and God’s complete revelation is sufficient to make us complete (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is law. The gospel is, of course, much more than divine law, yet it nevertheless is God’s law for us (1 Corinthians 9:27). It is a law of liberty. Peter called the law of Moses “a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10). The law of Christ is one of liberty; it is not merely a law but a system of grace (Romans 6:14), freeing us from the yoke of the old law and especially from sin and its terrible consequences. Let’s be doers of the word. ■

Service Leaders for the Week		
	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Howard Moore	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Albert Harrison Sr	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Clifton Lefort	
CUP	Albert Lee Harrison	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Bruce Hollander	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Adam Gibson
CLOSING PRAYER	Greg Winget	Brian Wilson