

PathLights

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

June 10, 2018

Commitment to Excellence

by Frank Himmel

"Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

Peter's admonition reminds us of several sobering realities.

First, **someone is watching us**. Have you ever watched or listened to someone when he or she didn't know you were paying any attention? Of course you have. If you have done that to others, rest assured that others are likewise observing you. Who is? Your children, grandchildren, or other young people you are around; your schoolmates, fellow workers, and neighbors; people with whom you do business; maybe even people you hardly know. Not always, but from time to time someone is paying close attention and making a judgment based on what he or she observes.

Second, **the world is watching critically**. Peter uses the term *Gentiles*, not in its technical sense, but of the world, of those who are not God's people. He notes that they may look through faultfinding eyes, slandering you as an evildoer. That is no surprise.

Remember how the world looked at Jesus. He "went about doing good," yet He was variously regarded as a drunkard, a blasphemer, even demon possessed. "If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:25). That brings us to Peter's point...

We must go "**above and beyond**" to provide a good **example**. The previous verse commands us to "abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." Any involvement in such things is all a faultfinding observer needs to dismiss us as evildoers, hypocrites. But this verse takes us a step further. Our behavior must be better than not bad; it must be excellent. This is the same word Paul used when he wrote, "For we have regard for what is honorable [excellent], not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:21). Even marginally bad speech, dress, conduct, entertainment, and transactions must be shunned. Of course, a critical watcher may twist ▶

Lights in the World

Vacation Bible School
for the whole family
June 18-21
7:00 p.m.



“Unbind Him”

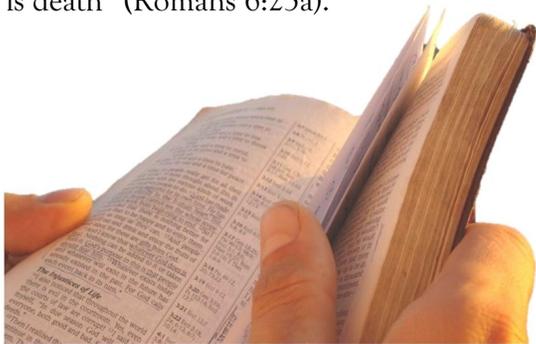
by Frank Himmel

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead by calling to him, “Lazarus, come forth” (John 11:43). “The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go’” (v. 44).

This was likely not intended, but these verses make a good summary of salvation.

We are bound by sin. Sin is often committed in the name of freedom, but it truly has a binding, enslaving effect. Simon the Sorcerer was “in the bondage of iniquity” (Acts 8:23), and Paul described himself as “sold in bondage to sin” (Romans 7:14). Jesus said, “Truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin” (John 8:34).

Death accompanies sin’s bondage. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23a).



We are saved when we answer Jesus’ call to “come forth” and follow Him, thereby becoming His disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). In baptism we are “raised up with Him” (Colossians 2:12) and “made...alive together with Him” (v. 13). Our new life is one in which we are no longer bound by sin. “But thanks be to God that though you were the slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17-18).

Instead of wearing the old grave clothes of sin, we are clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Are you dead in sin or alive in Christ? ■

Commitment to Excellence - continued from p. 1
the very best behavior into a charge of wrongdoing. The point is, don’t give him any extra ammunition.

Why is all this so important? Because for those who are watching us, **we may be the means of God’s visitation.** The expression *day of visitation* can refer to God’s punishment, as in Isaiah 10:3. But it can also refer to an opportunity for God’s mercy (Luke 19:44); that meaning fits better in our text. The hope is, our behavior will be such that those who at first reject God and His people will come to accept Him because they see nothing but good in us. Let each of us ask, Might someone do that based on watching me? ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Greg Winget	John Baucom
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Bruce Hollander
OPENING PRAYER	Brian Wilson	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Albert Lee Harrison	
CUP	Adam Gibson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Adam Wilson	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Howard Moore
CLOSING PRAYER	Chris Brooks	Justin Candella