

PathLights

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

May 19, 2019

Three Indispensables

by Frank Himmel

Vehicles come with lots of options. Many of them are luxuries: they add to the comfort or fun of driving, but they do nothing to make the vehicle more capable of getting you where you need to go. These days even the base models of most vehicles include numbers of things we could do without: carpeted floors, radios, etc. Some components, however, are absolutely essential. There is no way the vehicle can succeed without them. Engines and brakes are prime examples.

The author of Hebrews pointed out three things that are indispensable in religion. We cannot get to heaven without them.

Jesus' Blood

"And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed by the shedding of blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (10:22). Not just any blood will do. The Law's blood of bulls and goats sanctified for the cleansing of the flesh (10:13), but "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin" (10:4). Jesus, "not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (10:12). "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God,

cleansed your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (10:14). Jesus' blood is indispensable.

Faith

"And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (11:6). God conditions our salvation on faith. We must trust Him, His provisions, and His instructions. In Hebrews, as in the rest of the Bible, saving faith is obedient faith. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going" (11:8). We do not have to fully understand, but we do have to fully trust. Faith is indispensable.

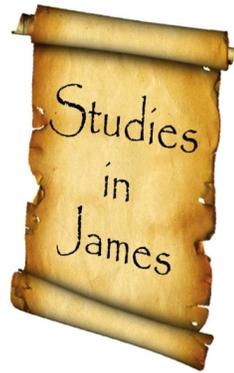
Sanctification

"Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (12:14). To *sanctify* is to set apart. The Bible uses the word *sanctification* both of the state of being set apart to God and of conduct appropriate to that state. "For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4). Like Jesus' blood and faith, sanctification or right conduct is indispensable. All three are essential in our daily walk with God now and in being with Him in eternity. ■



A Little Member with a Big Effect

by Frank Himmel



At the beginning of his discussion of controlling our tongues, James makes two vital observations.

First, *tongue-control must be part of broader self-control*. “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well” (3:2). The point of this verse is not merely that the tongue is the most difficult body member to control, though that may well be. The tongue is simply a spokesman; that being the case, we cannot hope to control it when other aspects of our lives are not what they should be.

Are you having trouble with angry words? Work on your temper, your patience. Trouble with false words? Since lying is often coverup, keep the rest of your life clean, and eliminate greed or envy or pride or other motives to lie. Trouble with foul language? You may need to stop up your ears! Trouble with saying presumptuous things? Quit fault-finding or judging from insufficient evidence. Trouble with not knowing what to say? Maybe you need to learn to care more.

Second, *we must respect the tongue’s vast potential*, which is disproportionate to its size. James offers three parallels.

Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! (vv. 3-5).

Though small, bridles, rudders, and sparks can have great effects. Skillfully managed, they convert what otherwise would be useless or even dangerous into productive means. A horse might pull your load or trample you to death. A ship might safely convey masses or sink with “titanic” losses. Managed is the key. Pilots and riders must know when to act, to what extent, in what direction, and just as importantly, when to stop. A calm, steady demeanor works best. Speakers require the same skill set!

The tongue has marvelous potential for good. With it we can teach, encourage, inspire, advise, warn, heal, comfort, stand for right, or just brighten someone’s day. Of course, it has just as much potential for harm. Wrongly used it can promote error, discourage, enrage, divide, defame, crush, incite to evil, etc. Either effect is the product of our use of it; tongues don’t operate by themselves!

One more thing. Everything James says about our physical tongues applies equally to our “electronic tongues”—our posts, likes, tweets, etc.— which potentially have even broader reach. ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Greg Winget	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Bruce Williams	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Jason Chandler	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Steven Turner	
CUP	Adam Wilson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Kerry Gray	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Bruce Hollander
CLOSING PRAYER	Gary Hagler	Chase Sibley