



PathLights

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

April 21, 2019

Finishing

by Frank Himmel

In John's gospel, Jesus' final words from the cross were, "It is finished" (19:30). They were a fitting culmination of His life.

There was so much that Jesus came to do.

He came to be a light to the world (John 12:46), exposing the darkness of sin and ignorance that was and is so prevalent.

In every way, Jesus came to do the Father's will (John 6:38). He did that so completely that the night before His crucifixion He could pray, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do" (17:4).

FINISH LINE

He came to preach the gospel (Mark 1:38), the good news of salvation, of His kingdom, and of the better life that can be found in Him.

He came to testify to the truth (John 18:37). As God's final spokesman He presented the truth in word and deed, so that He could say, "I am...the truth" (14:6).

He came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:32), which is why He was so often in their company, much to the dismay of His critics. He treated the lost with compassion when He could and firmness when they resisted.

He came to serve (Matthew 20:28), serving both God and man. Everything Jesus did benefitted others in one way or another.

He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17), every prediction they made of Him, whether directly in a word or indirectly in a picture.

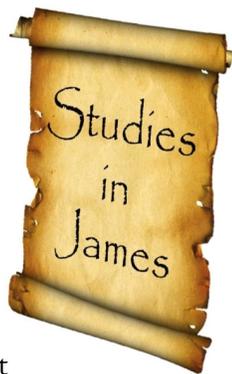
Now there was one more thing to do. Jesus came to give His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45), and that meant death on the cross. As much as He had already done, He would have fallen short without completing this final, essential earthly task. And not only would He have fallen short, we would be without hope.

Can you not see in Jesus the importance of finishing? That principle is just as vital to His followers as it was to Him. A good start is not enough. Years of work and service will be to no avail if we turn aside to the world's attraction or give up under duress.

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12). Be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). Heaven is for finishers. ■

Demonic Faith

by Frank Himmel



James, writing in a somewhat conversational style with his brethren, affirms that faith without works is dead (2:17). It cannot save and is useless in any practical sense (v. 14).

James then depicts someone listening in on this conversation and interjecting his own thoughts: “But someone may well say, ‘You have faith and I have works’” (v. 18a). This listener suggests that religion might manifest itself in different ways—faith in one person, works in another—with the implication that one is just as good as another. In effect, that negates James’s point that faith needs works to be complete.

James responds with a challenge: “Show me your faith without the works” (v. 18b). Just how would one do that? How could you demonstrate faith apart from doing something? It cannot be done! James therefore confidently adds, “And I will show you my faith by my works” (v. 18c).

To further illustrate the uselessness of faith without works, James points to demons. “You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?” (vv. 19-20).

“God is one” is a fundamental truth. Moses told the Israelites, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4). That verse, along with a few that follow it, was so fundamental that it was commonly recited as a daily prayer in Jewish synagogues.

Do you believe in God? So do demons! And they shudder. Their faith, while certainly not resulting in salvation, at least makes them tremble at the prospect of facing God.

Here is the record from Mark’s gospel. A demon-possessed man in the synagogue at Nazareth cried out to Jesus, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” (1:24). Another demon-possessed man “seeing Jesus from a distance, he ran up and bowed down before Him; and shouting with a loud voice, he said, ‘What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore you by God, do not torment me!’” (5:6-7). Mark summarized, “Whenever the unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and shout, ‘You are the Son of God!’” (Mark 3:11).

Even demons have better sense than to be atheists or agnostics! Their faith produces a strong emotional response, yet surely no one would argue that it is sufficient to save. That being the case, one would have to be a “foolish fellow” indeed to believe in the existence of God but live so as to deny Him. Who wants to have demonic faith? ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Greg Winget	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Sam Walters	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Brian Wilson	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Bruce Williams	
CUP	Bruce Hollander	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Chris Brooks	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Stachys McLeod
CLOSING PRAYER	Carlos Garcia	Kerry Gray