

PathLights

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

August 20, 2017

A Heart Set on God

by Frank Himmel

"For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10).

Ezra belongs to the restoration period of Old Testament history. About eighty years after Jerusalem's temple was rebuilt, King Artaxerxes authorized a second group of captives to return under Ezra. His mission was to teach God's law. Artaxerxes ordered the provincial rulers in Palestine to provide Ezra with whatever he needed. The King himself donated funds to pay for operating expenses at the temple (Ezra 7).

The Bible emphasizes that Artaxerxes granted Ezra's requests because "the hand of the Lord was upon him" (Ezra 7:6, 9, 28). And why was God's hand so favorable toward this priest? Because, as our text explains, he had set his heart on God. That involved three things.

First, **Ezra set his heart to study God's law.** He was not presumptuous about God's will. It is all-too-common for people to just assume that God views things the way they do. Some think they have an intuitive knowledge of right and wrong implanted by God. But Jeremiah said, "I know, O Lord, that a

man's way is not in himself, nor is it in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

God's thoughts are not the same as ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). If we want to know His will, we must listen to His word. The blessed man is the one whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Second, **Ezra set his heart to practice God's law.** It does little good to know God's will if we do not live it. James likened that to looking in a mirror, then ignoring the needed changes (James 1:23-24).

"But one 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" (v. 25). Later he added, "To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (4:17).

Third, **Ezra set his heart to teach God's law.** That was part of his priestly function (Deuteronomy 33:8-11). But it was more: it was another expression of his love for God. Just as Ezra desired for himself the blessings that come from a godly life, he wanted that for others as well.

People with Ezra's heart care about little children, whose hearts must be molded. They are concerned about their peers, who may have had little opportunity to hear God's law. And they are aware that folks who know tend to forget when they are not reminded.

Ezra's heart was set on the Lord. Is yours? ■



Time

by Frank Himmel

Past

“For the time already passed is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4:3). *Put sin in the past and keep it there.*

Present

“And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—for He says, ‘At the acceptable time I listened to you, and on the day of salvation I helped you.’ Behold, now is ‘the acceptable time,’ behold, now is ‘the day of salvation’” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2). *Be saved and stay saved.*



Future

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). *Look forward to the Lord’s coming and receiving the crown.*

Dying in the Lord



by Frank Himmel

“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them’” (Revelation 14:13).

Contextually, this verse is especially about martyrs. Satan’s messengers threatened those who would not serve him, that is, his agent, the beast from the sea (13:15-17). God countered that those who do will drink divine wrath in full strength; they will be tormented forever and ever and have no rest (14:9-11). Rest is reserved for those who remain faithful and obedient to God (v. 12), even to the point of death.

That said, God’s promised rest awaits all of His people (Hebrews 4:9). Of course, to die in the Lord we must first live in the Lord. Having cited Israel’s shortcomings in the wilderness, the author of Hebrews admonished, “Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:10). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Mark Clifton	Greg Winget	Josh Baucom
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Bruce Williams	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Greg Winget	Albert Lee Harrison	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Mike Zachry	Mike Zachry	
CUP	Kerry Gray	Kerry Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Carlos Garcia
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	Josh Baucom	Daven Daniel