

# PathLights

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

October 23, 2016

## False Hope For Eternity

by Frank Himmel

Hope is not the same as desire. Hope includes expectation – some basis for thinking the desired outcome will occur. I suppose most everyone hopes to pass through the final judgment successfully. However, the Bible warns against some bases of hope that will surely disappoint. Consider a few.



*"There is no eternal punishment."*  
Increasing numbers are convinced that there is no such place as hell. They say God is too kind and loving to allow that. Therefore, they console themselves that the worst that might happen to them is

missing out on heaven and being annihilated. God's word plainly says otherwise. Jesus Himself warned against being cast into hell, "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48).

*"He lived a good life."* Is not this the most common explanation of why people think a departed friend or loved one is going to heaven? It's not that he was a devoted follower of Christ. He was a good guy, a good friend, a good neighbor. Not perfect, but good. Again, Scripture is clear. "By the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20). Salvation is not based on our works (Ephesians 2:9). Good morals are not enough.

*"God doesn't care about this sin."* Some think particular violations of God's law are no great thing. Others act as if little of what He says on any subject matters. Psalm 10 reminds us that it is the fool who says to himself, "God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it" (v. 11). "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking" (Hebrews 12:25).

*"God's grace will cover it."* Anyone who is saved will be saved by the grace of God. We must all rely on that. But some do so unduly. They persist in conduct plainly prohibited by God's word, then relieve themselves of repentance by declaring confidence in God's grace. In the middle of Romans, Paul's great essay on salvation by grace through faith, the Apostle warned, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (6:1-2).

*"I accepted Jesus."* Peter said of Jesus, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Again, the Bible is clear. Salvation is by faith in Christ, but not by faith only (James 2:26). One must turn from sin, confess Christ, and be baptized into Him for forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9-10). And then abide in His word (John 8:31-32). To those who profess Jesus as Lord but do not obey Him, He will say at the judgment, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness" (Matthew 7:23).

Are you sure about your salvation? ■

# Imitate What Is Good

by Frank Himmel

“Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (3 John 11a).



All of us tend to be imitators or mimics (John’s actual term). We mimic speech, picking up trendy words or expressions, such as the current “that’s awesome!” We mimic appearance; how else can you explain the explosion in the tattoo business? We mimic conduct, too. That might be something as simple as adopting another’s mannerisms, but it often involves more serious matters of right and wrong behavior.

We may even mimic attitudes, particularly those we learned from our parents or those displayed by our close associates.

There is nothing inherently wrong with being an imitator. It can be a positive activity (Ephesians 5:1). The key is who or what we imitate.

John calls on us to be discerning. Do not just pick up on any trend you see or hear. Do not follow just any

example. Distinguish the good from the bad, the wise from the unwise. Only imitate what is worthy of imitation.

Now, consider John’s context. Writing to his beloved friend Gaius, the Apostle describes several church members. First, he mentioned some traveling teachers who had crossed paths with Gaius. These were working sacrificially for the cause of Christ (vv. 5-8). Next, John mentioned Diotrephes, a self-seeking member of the congregation Gaius attended. Diotrephes liked having his way and was not above manipulation and misrepresentation in achieving his ends (vv. 9-10). Then there was Demetrius, who enjoyed a widespread good reputation (v. 12). It was against the backdrop of these varied characters that John admonished, “Beloved do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.”

Sadly, even at church, not everyone is what he or she ought to be. Some, like Diotrephes, may leave a good bit to be desired. John’s advice is simple: be careful whom you imitate. Don’t let yourself get caught up in someone’s effort to advance his own agenda. Don’t make the worldly minded members’ priorities yours, and don’t just assume their moral choices are okay. Don’t single out the member who is doing the least to compare yourself to.

Keep your focus on the best examples. As Paul encouraged the Corinthians, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Adam Gibson	Bruce Williams
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Brian Wilson	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Gary Hagler	TBD	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	Jason Chandler	Jason Chandler	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing	Mark Clifton
CLOSING PRAYER	J B Williams	TBD	Adam Wilson