

# PathLights

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

May 21, 2017

## A Reckless Path

by Frank Himmel

King Balak of Moab feared the approaching Israelite army, which had just handily defeated Moab's neighbors, the Amorites. Balak decided his best option was to hire the prophet Balaam to come curse Israel. God, however, plainly instructed Balaam not to go because Israel was blessed, not cursed.

Balak did not give up. He boosted his offer. Balaam knew God's will, yet in view of the enticing reward he once again sought God's permission. This time God allowed him to go (God does not prevent us from sinning when we are determined to do so!) but warned that he could only speak the word God gave him.

As Balaam was traveling toward Moab, God sent an angel to block his path. The prophet's donkey saw the angel but Balaam did not. Three times the donkey took evasive measures, each time prompting Balaam to strike her. Then in a unique occurrence, God enabled the donkey to speak! God then opened Balaam's eyes to see the angel, who explained to the prophet, "I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me" (Numbers 22:32, NIV).

A reckless path—that's an apt description of the road too many are traveling. The Hebrew word depicts one rushing headlong toward destruction.

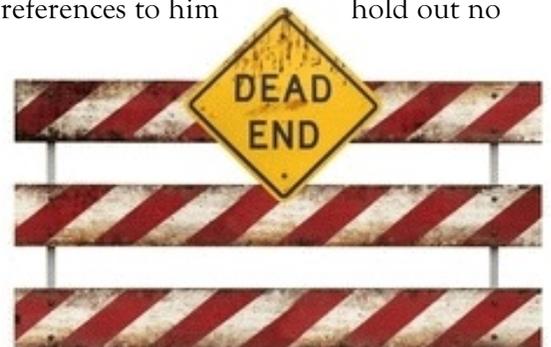
*Any path that is contrary to God's will is a reckless path!* In some cases the coming destruction is rather obvious,

such as the paths of drug abuse and alcohol, promiscuous sex, uncontrolled anger, laziness, divorce, etc. In other cases the disastrous end may be less obvious: after all, not every sin brings immediate consequences, and only through God's revelation [the Bible] can we get a glimpse of what awaits us after this life. We also need to remember that a reckless path is often a religious path, just not the one mapped out by God (Matthew 7:21-23).

God is not going to send us angels, talking donkeys, or any other supernatural messengers to warn us when we are headed the wrong direction. We have to rely on His word for that. It is sufficient for honest, God-fearing hearts (Luke 16:31).

How did things work out for Balaam? Three times he tried to curse Israel; each time a blessing came out of his mouth instead (Numbers 23-24). However, the persistent prophet finally got his wish. He convinced the people of Peor to seduce Israel into idolatry, thereby bringing God's curse on them (Numbers 31:16).

Did Balaam receive his reward from Balak? If he did it was short-lived: Balaam was soon killed in battle by the Israelites (Joshua 13:22). More importantly, New Testament references to him hold out no hope that his eternal reward will be any better. His was truly a reckless path. ■



# Pew Bibles

by Frank Himmel

Most churches have pew Bibles scattered throughout the auditorium, often in songbook racks. A pew Bible is typically a hardback Bible containing only the text, with no additional notes or helps. Pew Bibles enable visitors who come empty-handed to follow along during Scripture readings and sermons. They are relatively cheap (typically \$5-10) and are sometimes given away as a means of spreading God's word.

Most churches also have another kind of pew Bible. These are much nicer, far more expensive editions, featuring leather bindings and a full assortment of helps. These other "pew Bibles" are not intended for just anyone to use; you see, they belong to church members who routinely leave them in their pews. Ironically, these Bibles are often housed in fancy carrying cases!

In our time of prosperity, it is possible that this latter kind of pew Bible is simply a matter of convenience. Those who leave them behind may well have another Bible at home which they regularly read and study. I certainly hope so. While the public reading of Scripture is vital (1 Timothy 4:13), so is individual daily study (Acts 17:11).

Increasing numbers are using electronic Bibles, yet for some reason you never see phones or tablets left in the pews. Hmm! ■

# Meek

by Frank Himmel



"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

Our culture says it is vital that we stand up for ourselves and protect our rights. Litigation is the order of the day. "Blessed are the meek" is a direct assault on such humanistic thinking.

What is meekness? Dictionary.com says it means 1. humbly patient or docile, 2. overly submissive or compliant; spiritless; tame. That second definition is certainly not the Bible idea! Both Moses (Numbers 12:3) and Jesus (Matthew 11:29) were meek, but they were by no means spiritless. Meekness is not weakness. To the contrary it is strength, but strength which is kept under control, humbly directed by God's desire, hence as gentle as the divine will dictates.

Jesus perfectly illustrates this quality. He always sought to do the Father's will (John 8:29). Thus, He stood boldly and uncompromisingly against error and its advocates, yet with reference to personal attacks, "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). ■

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Chris Brooks	David Gray	Bruce Williams
SONG LEADER	Carlos Garcia	Bruce Williams	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Howard Moore	Adam Gibson	
LORD'S SUPPER			
BREAD	Brian Wilson	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Josh Baucom	Josh Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Rawland Daniel		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Bruce Williams
CLOSING PRAYER	Kerry Gray	Steven Turner	Albert Harrison Sr