

PathLights

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

December 11, 2016

Keep Going

by Frank Himmel

Have you begun to have some spiritual interest lately, thinking about God and your relationship to Him? Don't stop there. Keep going. Open your Bible and read about His will for you. Spend some time with it and reflect on what you are reading. The gospel is God's power for salvation (Romans 1:16).

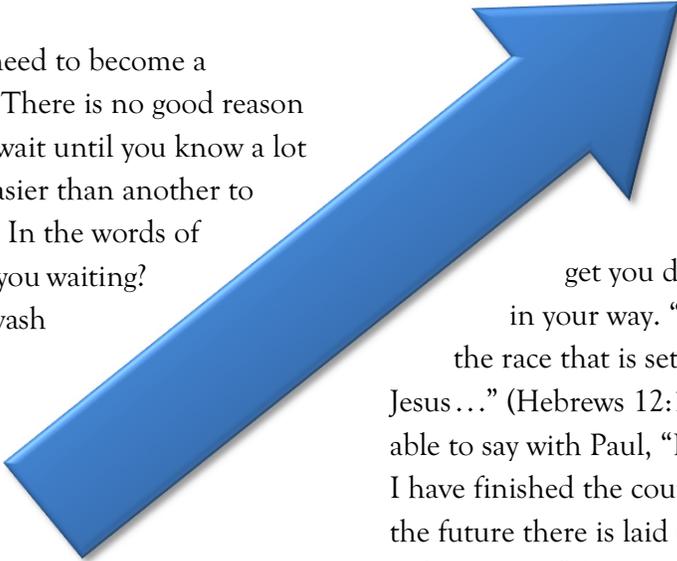
Have you come to the point where you believe in Jesus? Do you believe that He is who He said He was — the Son of God who died for your sins and rose from the dead? Great! But don't stop there. Keep going. While faith in Jesus is essential (John 8:24), the Bible plainly says that we are not justified by faith alone (James 2:24).

Have you decided that you need to become a Christian? If so, keep going. There is no good reason to delay. You don't need to wait until you know a lot more, and one time is not easier than another to put away the sin in your life. In the words of Ananias, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16, NKJV).

Have you been baptized into Christ? Don't stop there.

Keep going. Being added to Christ means being added to His church (Acts 2:47). Become an active member of the body of Christ in your area, where you can do as the first disciples did, "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). It's time to go, and it's also time to grow.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-8).



Have you been following Christ for a good while? Don't stop now. Keep going. Don't let worldly interests get you sidetracked. Don't let life's discouragements get you down. Don't let opposition get in your way. "...Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:1-2). At the end of your life be able to say with Paul, "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" (2 Timothy 4:7-8a). ■

Does Obeying Conditions Earn Blessings?

by Frank Himmel

Jesus plainly said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:16a ESV). It is amazing how many people interpret that to mean whoever believes and is *not* baptized will be saved. A common argument goes like this. Baptism is something we do, hence a work; if baptism is essential to salvation, then we are saved by works, earning our salvation; the Bible says we are saved by grace, not by meritorious works; therefore, baptism is not a requirement for salvation.

The first fallacy in this line of thought is defining a work as anything we do. Why would that definition not also apply to belief? Belief is something we do, Jesus even called it a work (John 6:27). Is faith, therefore, non-essential?

The second fallacy is the notion that obeying God’s conditions somehow earns His blessings. Thinking people surely know better. Consider three Old Testament examples.

Once when the Israelites complained about their wilderness journey, God sent poisonous snakes among them. A number of those who were bitten died. The rest pled for mercy. God told Moses to erect a bronze serpent and set it on a standard; “everyone who is

bitten, when he looks at, he will live” (Numbers 21:8). Looking at the serpent was something the people had to do. Did that look earn God’s healing? Of course not, and no one would suggest it did.

When the Israelites reached the promised land, the first city they fought against was Jericho. God said, “See I have given Jericho into your hand” (Joshua 6:2). Jericho was a gift, yet it was given conditionally. The Israelites had to march around the city as God prescribed. When they did, the walls fell. Hebrews 11:30 says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.” Faith obeyed God’s condition. Did the Israelites earn Jericho by marching around it? Was it no longer a divine gift? Of course not, and no one would suggest that.

Later in Israel’s history, a Syrian captain named Naaman came to the prophet Elisha to be cleansed of his leprosy. Elisha told him to go dip in the Jordan River seven times and he would be clean (2 Kings 5:10). At first Naaman balked, then he changed his mind and did as he was instructed. When he did, he was cleansed (v. 14). Did Naaman’s dipping in the Jordan earn his cleansing? Did that make it any less a matter of God’s grace? Of course not, and no one would suggest it did.

Obeying God’s conditions does not earn God’s blessings and negate His grace. Meanwhile, Jesus still said, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.” ■



Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Josh Baucom	Mark Clifton	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Carlos Garcia	Greg Winget
OPENING PRAYER	Howard Moore	Albert Lee Harrison	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	J B Williams	J B Williams	
CUP	David Gray	David Gray	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Daven Daniel		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Brian Wilson
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Ron Cunningham	Albert Harrison Sr