

# PathLights

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

March 20, 2016

## Consistent Interpretation

by Frank Himmel

Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth" (John 17:17). By its very nature, truth is not self-contradictory. It is consistent. This fact suggests a vital principle of Bible interpretation: *do not interpret one passage so as to contradict another*. Consider a few examples of this mistake.

Some attempt to justify the practice of infant baptism based on Bible statements about a household being baptized (e.g., Lydia in Acts 16:15 or the Philippian Jailer in Acts 16:33). First, this argument assumes that these households had infants in them, despite the evidence against it (see Acts 16:34). More to the point, it puts these references squarely at odds with numerous passages which make belief or faith a prerequisite to baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36; 18:8; Romans 10:13-14; etc.). Infants are clearly incapable of hearing and believing the gospel!

In Romans 6:14, Paul wrote, "...for you are not under law but under grace." Should that be interpreted to mean Christians are under no law? Of course not. If we are under no law we cannot sin, for "where there is no law, there is also no violation" (Romans 4:14); and "if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar

and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). We are under the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21). Paul's point in Romans 6:14 is that we are not merely under a law but more especially under God's grace. This is one of several passages where a "not...but" contrast is relative, not absolute (cf. Matthew 5:17; 1 Peter 3:3-4; John 6:39).

One debater interpreted Paul's statement, "Each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2), as an absolute, permitting any man or woman to marry, regardless of previous marriages or the reasons they ended. That makes Paul contradict both himself (vv. 10-11) and Jesus (Matthew 19:3-12). A similar mistake is made with another statement in the same chapter: "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called" (v. 20). To apply this principle to sinful conduct or relationships makes it contradict passages that call on Christians to stop sinning. Paul applied it to circumcision and slavery, not to immoral behavior!

Some suggest the elders appointed in Acts 14:23 were just older people, not people put in some official position. That is inconsistent with 1 Timothy 1:3-8 and Titus 1:5-9, where the instruction is to appoint men with specific qualities to a specific task.

Do not interpret one passage so as to contradict another. Do not ignore passages which disagree with your position. Be fair with the text – all of it.



# What Is the Bible?

by Frank Himmel

**The Bible is a lamp.** “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). In a world of darkness, it shows us the way to go.

**The Bible is a mirror.** It helps us see ourselves as we are, as God sees us. “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 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” (James 1:23-25).

**The Bible is seed.** “...the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). It is the beginning of spiritual life. Like any other seed, it must be planted – in this case, implanted – to produce. And like all seed, it produces after its kind, it yields the same product every time.

**The Bible is milk.** “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). It sustains us. It satisfies us.

**The Bible is meat.** It contains advanced insights as well as milk-like basics. “For though by this time you

ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).

**The Bible is a fire.** ““Is not My word like fire?” declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 23:29a). Like a smelter’s fire, it burns away the dross, the impurities in our lives.

**The Bible is a hammer.** “And like a hammer which shatters a rock?” (Jeremiah 23:29b). At times we can be mighty hardheaded! But no matter how much we may try to deny its message, the Bible keeps on saying the same thing. It steadily drives home the truth.

**The Bible is a sword.** “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). It is both an offensive and defensive weapon, enabling us to withstand Satan’s assaults, and to attack and destroy the error by which he confuses.

**The Bible is a witness.** “Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you” (Deuteronomy 31:26). While the primary purpose of the Bible is to help us, as illustrated in all the previous pictures, it also serves as a witness against us when we disobey it. It testifies that God has revealed His will to us, and we are without excuse for ignoring it.

## Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Brian Wilson	Carlos Garcia	Mark Clifton
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Greg Winget	William Lefort
OPENING PRAYER	J B Williams	Adam Gibson	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Steven Turner	Steven Turner	
CUP	John Baucom	John Baucom	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Kerry Gray		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Frank Himmel	Chad Brock
CLOSING PRAYER	Justin Candella	Lee Davenport	Albert Lee Harrison