

5/01/18

Stephen's Sermon... Israel In The Wilderness

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 45 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 70s.

"This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people' " (Acts 7:37)

Like all good preachers, when a message is prepared and delivered, Stephen first laid the groundwork. While he rehearsed foundational events in the formation of Israel, he was intent to demonstrate that God had acted decisively in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The Jews who listened to this speech were careful students of the Bible, and they knew that God was one day going to send an Anointed One... He was to be a king like David, a high priest like Aaron, and a prophet and lawgiver like Moses. Jesus was the Christ of God... He was the Savior who reigns. I

find this next point to be very interesting. The scribes and rabbis often turned to the Book of Deuteronomy and cited these passages; "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own brothers. You must listen to him..." "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell everything I command him..." (Deut.18: 15 & 18). Stephen called the Law "living oracles" because it brought life, but still, Stephen said, "our fathers" refused to obey it. They demanded that Aaron make gods and lead them back to Egypt; They sacrificed to idols and rejoiced in them. They rejected God, and God gave them up to worship the hosts of heaven. Here is one of the key parts of Stephen's sermon.... The Jewish people before him had a long history of rejecting God and putting others things ahead of Him and His laws. Stephen pleaded with them not to reject Him again by turning their backs on the Christ. These words rings as true in 2018 as they did then. When we allow things to take preeminence before God, we might as well be forming the golden calf and dancing around it in worship. God demands the same belief, obedience and dedication from us as He did from the Jewish leaders that Stephen was talking to.... Jesus is the Christ of God.... Jesus is the Savior who still reigns.

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love

mark

Phil.4:11

5/02/18

Stephen's Sermon... The Tabernacle And The Temple

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 55 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 80s.

"However, the Most High does not live in a house made by men. As the prophet says; 'Heaven is my throne, the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?' " (Acts 7:49-50).

Earlier in the Book of Acts (Chapter 6) we find out who Stephen is. When there arose a complaint from the Greek Jewish Christians that their widows were being neglected by the Hebraic Jewish Christians, seven men were chosen to take care of this problem. Among them were Stephen and Philip, both of who became preachers. In this part of Stephen's sermon to the Sanhedrin, (Vs 44-53) he addresses another important issue. Before Solomon's Temple was built, Stephen noted that Israel had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness. Moses had built it according to God's direction. Joshua had brought it into Canaan; and though it had been moved about from place to place and suffered defilement by enemies, such worship as Moses ordained continued until the time of David, David wanted to build the Temple, but it was left to his son Solomon. That Temple was destroyed, and the one Stephen and the Sanhedrin were in had been built by Herod the Great. The charges against Stephen are found in verse 13... "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law." So now we get to the heart of the matter. In reality, the Jerusalem Temple meant nothing to the worship of God. Stephen was striking at the heart of what it meant to be a Jew. Today's verses are quoted from Isaiah 66:1-2... God, says Stephen, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Things are still the same today. God does not reside in some special building, but in the hearts of His believers..."Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple, and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).... "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Cor.16:19). Many years ago, Stephen spoke the truth about where God is, and the words still ring out to us today. We must all strive to lead holy, godly and pure lives so that we will not desecrate God's real temple...

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/03/18

Stephen's Sermon... The Point Of No Return

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly clear 68 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with highs topping out at about 90.

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute?"

They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him.... (Acts 7:51-52).

As we proceed through the last part of Acts 7 about Stephen, the gospel preacher took his message to the point of no return. To the mighty Sanhedrin of the Jews, Stephen was a Christian nobody... Despite this, he dared to say to them, "You stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit." WHEW! It certainly appears that Stephen's detractors had been right about him, as even the Sanhedrin was not prepared to hear his words against this holy place... He reminded the richest and most powerful men in Jerusalem that they were acting just like their forefathers who had always resisted those sent with a message from God. Now, in these last days, they had replicated the steps of their fathers. When God sent His Son, Jesus, they had become His betrayers and murderers. When they heard these words, they broke out into a frenzy and were ready to kill another innocent victim. Jesus had begun (Jn.2:13-22) and ended (Matt.21:12-13) His ministry by cleansing the Jerusalem temple. He directed the thinking of His followers to a time when the temple would be torn down, and the house of God would be something different... "Destroy this temple. and in three days I will raise it up" (Jn.2:19). The author added that He was speaking of the temple as His own body... Years later, Peter wrote this; "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood" (1 Pet.2:5). Through this trajectory of Jesus, Stephen and Peter, Christians can see one of the most important "redefinition's" that life in Christ means. As we stand here in 2018, the people of God, the land of God, and the temple of God have taken on new dimensions in Christ. This is what we should be proud to be a part of today...

Have a wonderful day.... Let His light shine through you..... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/04/18

Stephen's Sermon... Learning From History

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 71 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 80s.

"When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I can see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God' " (Acts 7:54-56).

We all know the end of the story of Stephen.. Because the words of his sermon had indicted them in their rejection of Jesus as the true Messiah, the men of the Sanhedrin had him dragged

out into the street where they stoned him to death. Lets now read between the lines... Preaching the truth, as Stephen clearly demonstrated, has a great deal to do with understanding and proclaiming events from the history of God's people... If science, technology and economics are disciplines that attract the young, history is the realm of maturity. Over time, one comes to see the relevance of history to life. It is a clear teacher... From the past come lessons that encourage and chasten, lessons that inspire and warn. When folks question why we read the Old Testament. all of these things should ring true to us. When Peter looked for a model for Christians to follow, he pointed them back in time to the example of Jesus... "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps" (1 Pet.1:21). When Stephen wanted the Jews to listen to the prophet (Jesus) who was like Moses, he walked them down history's path. He talked about the mistakes their fathers had made, and that they were making the same one with their rejection of the true Messiah. In our faith as Christians, we can look back to the days of Moses and learn. But most importantly, we can trace our roots 2,000 years ago to Jesus the Son of God who came to earth to save us.

History is versatile; It never fails to teach....

Have a great day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/05/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Associations

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 68 here in NJ this morning. There's a 60% chance of a morning shower followed by a mostly cloudy day. The highs will be in the low 70s.

In today's quiz you will match the person with the item associated with him or her... There's not necessarily any guilt with these associations and as always, have fun....

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| _____ 1. Pottage  | (a) Elisha     |
| _____ 2. Plumline | (b) Lazarus    |
| _____ 3. Harp     | (c) Lot's wife |
| _____ 4. Ark      | (d) Esau       |
| _____ 5. Axe head | (e) Moses      |

- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| _____ 6. Burning bush | (f) Pharaoh |
| _____ 7. Rib          | (g) Amos    |
| _____ 8. Salt         | (h) Noah    |
| _____ 9. Big fish     | (i) David   |
| _____ 10. Frogs       | (j) Jonah   |
| _____ 11. Crumbs      | (k) Eve     |

Have a great weekend and a glorifying and uplifting day of worship on His day.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/07/18  
Paul's Sermon At Athens

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 56 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with some sun peeking through in the afternoon. The highs will be in the low 70s. Welcome to Laverne from VA. She attended worship services with us yesterday and will be receiving our daily devotional for the first time this morning...

"So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you' " (Acts 17:22-23).

This week's devotionals will center around a sermon the apostle Paul preached to a group of Greeks in Athens. Back in Acts 13:16-41, he had preached a sermon before a group of Jews of the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch. A contrast of that sermon with this one in the 17th chapter to a group of Greek philosophers would reveal the content to be quite different... As is often the case, what a preacher is to proclaim has a great deal to do with the audience he wants to reach.

Interestingly enough, the sermon at Antioch and the one in Athens have a few important similarities. If you are ambitious enough, you might read them both, ( Acts13:16-41 & Acts 17:22-34 ) and see for yourselves. Both led to the declaration that God had shown Jesus to be the Christ through the resurrection of the dead ( 13:30 & 17:31 ). Both declared that Jesus was sent by God to take away the sins of man (13:23 & 17:31 ). While both sermons proclaimed Christ, they appealed to their audiences in different ways. In the sermon to the Jews in Antioch,

Paul mentioned the names of David and Abraham, since his audience would know them... In the one at Athens, he cited philosophers that were esteemed in the Greek-speaking world. So, what lesson are we to learn from these tidbits of comparison, and is that comparison worthwhile? Here it is.... The path to Christ was different in the two sermons, but both sermons led to the same place. We serve a resurrected Savior who came to earth to remove the sins of mankind. I can't help but want to sing the hymn, What a Might God We Serve... "What a mighty God we serve, What a mighty God we serve, Angels bow before Him. Heaven and earth adore Him; What a mighty God we serve." Maybe you'll sing it a few times today...

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/08/18  
You Are Very Religious

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 49 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 60s.

"So Paul stood in the midst of the Aeropagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.' "

As Paul moved through Athens, he found himself surrounded by small temples, altars, shrines and statues of the gods and heroes of Greek lore. All of this idolatry moved him to preach a sermon to them... As was his habit, Paul first went to the synagogue as he had done in other cities, but apparently nothing had come of that visit. Undaunted and unafraid in this pagan environment, Paul went into the marketplace, the lair of the Greek philosophers. "Now all the Athenians and strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new" (17:21). More than likely, many of them had come into the city in order to keep up with the latest trends, and their "business" was to pose and ponder arcane questions. They may have looked upon Paul as just another out-of-town babblers (vs.18), and lest they miss out on something new, they were determined to hear him. Paul must have been disgusted by all the idols he saw there, so he began mildly with today's verse to find some sort of common ground... After looking at all the idols, the best he could say was that they must be very religious because of their veneration of many Gods. He drew their attention to an inscription he had seen that said, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Using this as part of his introduction, Paul began to tell them of the God of Israel, unknown to them, but Creator to all. This set me to thinking about the church today and all the religious folks that are filing the pews. It set me to wondering how many idols in their lives were keeping them from truly doing God's

will. What things were in their lives that kept them from serving others. It least the Greeks were out in the open about their idolatry... Just a few thoughts to ponder this morning....

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/10/18  
God's Offspring

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy and foggy 53 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with highs in the low 70s.

"For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are also His children' " (Acts 17:28).

The apostle Paul knew the Old Testament inside out, and the words of the Law and the prophets were near to his heart. But, when the occasion called for it, he could also cite wisdom from other religions, including that from the Greek world. I have stressed this several times, but the audience will always affect the content of a sermon. For the discerning, "nuggets of truth" could be found even among the speculation of idolaters. From today's verse, "for in Him we live and move and exist," appear to be from a Cretan poet named Epimenides who wrote between 500-600 BC... The words from verse 29, "being then the offspring of God", is attributed to Aratus, a 3rd-century philosopher who lived in Cilicia from what is now modern Turkey. In both cases, the philosophers were conceiving of God more highly than Zeus or some other of the limited Greek deity. Here's the real kicker... Paul was intimating that the one God he declared, had been dimly understood even by some of their wise forefathers. These Greek thinkers knew God was not to be equated with statues of wood, gold or stone. (read vs 29-34)... Because of what His Son, Jesus Christ had done, the God Paul proclaimed in Athens was willing to overlook the ignorance of the past. Through Christ, messengers from God were authorized to call on men from every nation, language and ethnic group to repent, obey Him and serve Him alone. Does this sound familiar today? In this sermon, Paul did not go on to tell them of why Jesus had died nor of the witnesses to the resurrection from the dead, though he could have, and maybe did in the future. For this moment and this sermon, he set before them the basic outline of the message he proclaimed. Though some sneered about the resurrection from the dead, some believed and joined him. So.... What do you think about this sermon? I invite comments....

Have a wonderful day.... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/11/18

Receptiveness To The Gospel

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 63 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a partly to mostly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 70s. A great day for a ballgame...

"When the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them" (Ezra 5:1-2).

The receptiveness of people to the gospel of Christ often differs depending on the time and place in which it was or is preached... If we examine the times in which Jeremiah prophesied the words of God to the people, by any estimate, he found that those people of his day were not very interested in either repentance or righteousness. Of course, this led Jeremiah to become an often frustrated prophet. Lets take a look at today's two verses from the book of Ezra. The receptiveness to Ezra and the other prophets to rebuild the temple was completely different. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were able to rally the people around the cause of rebuilding the temple... The book of Acts is replete with occasions when the apostle Paul preached to folks in different cities. Paul's work rings a strangely similar bell to that of the prophets... He found the people at Corinth and Ephesus, for example, to be very open to the gospel call, while his experience in Athens, which we have examined this week, found many people to be disinterested. Do you think that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul preached great sermons to the Corinthian and Ephesian people and lousy ones to those in Athens? I'll let you mull that one over for a while... Whoever the people are, whether they hear or refuse to hear, Christians are to tell the world that God has sent a Savior. Those who respond to Him with obedience will receive the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life. All will not receive the message with the same eagerness, but Christians are to speak of Him to people of all nations and languages anyway. It is a part of our job description....

Have a great day.... T G I F Today God Is First Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/12/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Furnishings

Good Morning to all,

It is a rainy 61 here in NJ this morning. After a couple hours of rain, it will be a partly sunny day with highs in the mid to upper 70s.

In biblical times, houses had few pieces of furniture. In today's quiz, fill in the blanks with the furniture mentioned. Please do the quiz now, and don't table it until later on...

1. A man on a \_\_\_\_\_ was let down through a roof to see Jesus.
2. A beggar desired to eat crumbs which fell from a rich man's \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Jehoiada made a bank from a \_\_\_\_\_ to hold the offerings
4. The woman of Shunem and her husband prepared a room with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ for Elisha to use.
5. Jesus told a sick man with palsy (paralyzed) to take up his \_\_\_\_\_ and walk.
6. God said the Egyptians would have frogs everywhere, even in their \_\_\_\_\_.
7. In Proverbs, Solomon said that the hands of a virtuous woman grasps the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. To protect David, Michal placed an image in a \_\_\_\_\_ and said David was sick.
9. 7 men were chosen to work at \_\_\_\_\_ to free the disciples to study and preach.
10. According to Jesus, no one would put a \_\_\_\_\_ under a bushel.

Have a wonderful weekend, and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

Answers; (a) ovens, (b) table, (c) chest, (d) bed, (e) tables, (f) candle (lamp), (g) stool, (h) bed,  
(i) spindle, (j) couch, (k) bed, (l) table.

5/14/18

Paul's Sermon To The Ephesian Elders

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy and foggy 56 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with highs in the low 70s.

"From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you. from the 1st day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears. although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews' " (Acts 20:17-19).

Of all the sermons the apostle Paul preached and were recorded in the Book of Acts, this one to the Ephesian elders most closely resembles the kinds of things he wrote about in many of his letters. We have approached this issue about sermons before, but the audiences in both cases were similar. In the sermon here in Acts 20, the apostle addressed his work among them and their response to him. He spoke of an issue that was important then, and is still important today. His admonishment was to grow in faith, but prepare for setbacks. It is something we should take to heart...His audience in this message was an unspecified number of men who had accepted the responsibility to be elders or pastors among them. They knew the basics of faith as most of the readers of his letters did. As with other sermons, the people Paul addressed had a great deal to do with what he had to say, and to his manner of saying it. The timing of the message came near the end of his 3rd missionary journey, that was certainly not a "cakewalk" by any means. In the past three years, though fraught with danger, the apostle contributed important works to the New Testament. He had written both letters to the Corinthians and during a three month stay at Corinth, Paul had composed his letter to the Romans. In the midst of other burdens on the 3rd journey, Paul had gathered a sizeable collection for the poor in Judea and was on his way to Jerusalem when his ship was delayed. He saw the chance to speak with the Ephesian elders and did so. I see his lesson to them and us to be this; His sermon encouraged them (and us) in the faith and supplied them (and us) with the tools for Christian living and leadership. We should wake up each morning grateful for what we have in the Lord, and ascertain how we can use what we have to serve others.

Have a great start to your week.... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/15/18  
Going On The Defense

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy 61 here in NJ as I write this morning. There's a 50% chance of some morning rain followed by a partly sunny day with highs in the mid 80s.

"You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:20-21).

Games like baseball, football and basketball have both an offensive and defensive nature to them, The offense tries to score runs or points, while the defense attempts to keep the other team from scoring. From time to time during a game of football or basketball, the fans will rise up in unison and implore their team stop their opponent from scoring with the words; "defense.... defense.... defense..." From his 1st words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-21, Paul appealed to the way he had conducted himself during the three years he had been physically present with them.(Vs.31). Whether they like it or not, preachers and elders wield authority in the church by means of what they say and do, The seriousness with which they attach the gospel to their own lives is shown by the example they set for the flock... Whether they say it or act it, in one way or another, preachers and leaders are always saying, "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ..." (1 Cor.11:1). To be quite truthful, these words are not only for the leaders of a Christian fellowship, but for everyone. Paul's words were effective because he was always ready to reinforce those words by example and by an appeal to conduct. In a true Christian fellowship, folks get to know one another both in and out of weekly meetings. The elders at Ephesus knew that Paul had held up Christ both publicly and privately. Paul had implicitly charged them to judge all future teachers by his behavior as he had worked with them for that three years. So.... How do you like Paul's defense? Since he has set the example, we must look inside of ourselves and determine how good our defense is... How are we all doing?

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/16/18  
Destiny

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 66, and after a night of thunderstorms, there is a light rain falling. The morning rain will give way to a cloudy day with highs in the upper 60s.

"And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me ----- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Acts 20:22-24)

Yesterday was defense and today is destiny... There's another "d" tomorrow. As the apostle Paul was speaking to the Ephesian elders here in Acts 20, for some time his life had been hanging by a thread. Jews in the major cities had plotted to kill him (3, 19) and it had been a year or so since Demetrius had led the silversmiths, and then an unruly mob in Ephesus, demanding his blood. There was a shipwreck on the way and numerous beatings, so these warnings certainly looked ominous. For years, especially during the past two, Paul had preached with the sentence of death (2 Cor. 1:9) hanging over him. The Holy Spirit had spoken to him through prophets in cities along the route and had described the chains and tribulations that awaited him in Judea. For all the uncertainty that lay before him, Paul was not ready to lie down and surrender. The interesting thing here is that we can trace Paul's next few years through the Scriptures. Through this, Paul was able to say to these Ephesian elders that I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I might finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.... Despite all of this, Paul preached, modeled, wrote, comforted and served through to his death. Our lesson? We are all the apostle Paul on our journey through life to its eventual conclusion. Though we don't face all of the emotional and physical setbacks that he did, our Christian lives are filled with challenges we must face each day... We must not waver on this journey. We should look to God's Word to see the type of lives we ought to live, and live them to the very best of our abilities... We have chosen to live this life, and the Lord has in turn chosen us. We must live each day as if we were to be called home tomorrow.

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/17/18  
One's Desire

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 61 here in NJ this morning. There is a 100% chance of some scattered showers today with highs in the mid to upper 60s.

"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he has bought with His own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on guard!" (Acts 20:28-31).

In the 20th chapter of Acts, the apostle Paul has spoken of destiny and made his defense. Today we will look at his desire for the church and those that look after it. As this sermon was presented to the elders, (also called pastors, overseers and shepherds) the message is primarily to them and their job with the church after which they were appointed to be the

overseers. At this pivotal juncture of his life, Paul reminds them of his personal integrity, and that most likely, he would not see them again. He was aware of the dangers he faced and of the real possibility he would die in the near future. Against this backdrop, while still at Miletus, and as his ship was facing Jerusalem, Paul's heart was still absorbed with the well-being of the church at Ephesus. As surely as dangers awaited him, they also awaited the church, and it was his desire that the leaders would be aware of where these dangers would come from. These dangers still confront the church today, and it should be our desire to protect it. We don't have Paul with us personally as the Ephesian overseers did, but his words echo clearly to us through time. Just as the elders were to pray, study and learn so that individually they would be obedient to the Savior; they were to love and serve Him. Does this ring true to us today? Whatever hardships are faced, we must remember that the church is God's kingdom here on earth that Jesus purchased with His blood. It is the job description of each church member to defend His church... We at least partially accomplish this by being the most godly people we can be.

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/18/18  
Whose Important

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 61 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a cloudy day with a 100% chance of some rainfall. The highs will be in the mid 60s.

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body.... But God has combined the members of the body and given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Cor.12:12; 24-25).

As the apostle Paul finishes his sermon to the Ephesian elders, we come away with some great lessons. We learn that Paul will more than likely never see these folks he has spent over three years with again. We learn that overseers have been appointed and their job is to see to the spiritual development of the congregation. Paul's main mission is that the church here would be strong and that its members would remain faithful... As kind of a side note, how blessed was the Ephesian church to have the great apostle Paul with them? Can we just imagine that he was our preacher for three years and all the stuff we would learn from him? Even if that were true, there would come a time, just as it had with the Ephesian church, that he would have to move on. Even with well-trained elders in place, how would this specially blessed church survive and thrive without him? It is why I used some of his words to the church at Corinth to fill in the blanks. A church with Christ as its foundation is not just comprised of great

preacher and godly men serving as shepherds. The nuts and bolts that comprise a church are its believing members. 1 Cor.12:12 sets the tone for these believing members. "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though its parts are many, they form one body." The faithfulness of a church would not hinge on one or even several special people, but on all the parts that make it up... For his part, Paul had labored to serve, and we must do likewise. Our eyes must always be on the prize and the path we must travel to get to it. With the aid of like minded brothers and sisters in the Lord, an undivided body should march on toward eternal life. Just how important are these parts? "But that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" ( Vs.25-26). Whose important? All of us are, so we need to function that way....

Have a great day.... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/19/18

Saturday Morning Quiz... Parts of The Body

Good Morning to all,

It is a cloudy 54 here in NJ this morning with a light rain falling. After AM rainfall, it will be a cloudy day with highs in the low 70s.

Different parts of the body were used to teach biblical truths. Fill in the blank with the proper body part. I present you with this quiz for free, as it will not cost you an arm and a leg....

- \_\_\_ 1. The \_\_\_ is more deceitful than anything else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?
- \_\_\_ 2. If your right \_\_\_ makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you.
- \_\_\_ 3. But no one can tame the \_\_\_; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.
- \_\_\_ 4. From the same \_\_\_ come both blessing and cursing.
- \_\_\_ 5. For my \_\_\_ will utter the truth; and wickedness is an abomination to my \_\_\_.
- \_\_\_ 6. A wicked man displays a bold \_\_\_, but as for the upright, he makes his way sure.
- \_\_\_ 7. Like a bad \_\_\_ and an unsteady \_\_\_ is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.

\_\_\_ 8. Poor is he who works with a negligent \_\_\_\_, but the \_\_\_\_ of the diligent makes rich.

\_\_\_ 9. An evil doer listens to wicked \_\_\_\_; a liar pays attention to a destructive \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_ 10. The words of a fool's \_\_\_\_ are deep waters; the foundation of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

Answers; (some may be used more than once) (a) eye, (b) mouth, (c) heart, (d) lips, (e) ear, (f) tongue, (g) tooth, (h) mouth, (i) hand, (j) face, (k) foot

5/21/18

Paul In Jerusalem... May I Speak To You?

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy 62 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with highs in the mid 70s.

"As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the barracks, he asked the commander, 'May I say something to you?' 'Do you speak Greek?' he replied. 'Aren't you the Egyptian who started a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists out into the desert some time ago?' Paul answered, 'I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no ordinary city. Please let me speak to the people.' "  
(Acts 21:37-39).

This week will be the last in our series about sermons and preaching. With a bit of candor and curiosity, a person like you or I may pose this question; "When does a speech become a sermon?" That being stated, I believe that a sermon hardly requires a pulpit or a Sunday morning audience. A speech can become a sermon when it proclaims Christ... When a speaker appeals to Scripture and relies to the revelation from God, they have the beginnings and makings of a sermon... Remarks become a sermon when they demonstrate the truth of God's Word and when they urge hearers to obey the call of the gospel. A decision for Christ entails repentance, confession and baptism, but it may have additional meaning. It may also call for an inward resolve based on faith, love and knowledge. By any definition, the apostle Paul's speech to the mob in the Jerusalem temple that follows today's verses, was a sermon. As with all of his sermons, Paul would carefully craft his words to fit both the audience and the occasion. The setting was the temple in Jerusalem, and Paul had been at the center of a riot in the large outer court the Jews called "the court of the Gentiles..." It was a tense situation, and Paul was dragged from inner court to the outer and was saved from death by a garrison of Roman soldiers. You wouldn't think a normal person would want to preach a sermon under these circumstances, but Paul was not an ordinary person. We are not ordinary people either... We can share the good news of Jesus too. It may begin with our positive attitude and behavior. By

showing love, kindness, goodness and patience under less than favorable conditions, our witness can become a powerful one, and the sermon to someone that shows an interest may begin like this; "May I speak to you?"

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/22/18  
Defending A Belief

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy 55 here in NJ as I write this morning. It will be a mostly cloudy day with a 35% chance of some rain... The highs will be in the low 70s.

"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense. When they heard him speak in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said; 'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel, I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was as zealous for God as any of you are today' " (Acts 22:1-4)

In this sermon to any angry mob of Jews, Paul wants to establish just who he is so that he can present his defense to them. Gamaliel was considered to be one of the most learned, famed and respected rabbis of his day, and Paul (then Saul) had been his star pupil. As a Jew, this should put him on equal footing with them, if not a step or two higher on the Jewish pecking order. He went on to say that he was as zealous in his persecution of Christians as any of them... "I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison" (Vs.5). As a young man, Paul had learned of Jesus and of the people called Christians and the more he knew of them, the more he feared and hated them. Here's the real crux of it all; Paul had recognized the threat that Christians posed to Judaism and none of the mob he was speaking to could have been more zealous in the effort to wipe Christians from the earth than he was... In presenting his credentials to them, he hoped that his fellow Jews would give serious consideration to what he would say to them. It took a seriously consequential event for Paul to be swayed in his thinking to become a Christian, let alone an apostle. All of this begs me to think of us today in 2018... How serious are we in our defense of our faith. Are we willing, as Paul was, to present our defense as Christians to those around us? Maybe some of us has a story relating to how we came to the Lord that will strike a responsive chord with a potential believer. Are we willing to use it for their benefit? As the title of this devotional suggests, part of being a Christian is about Defending Our Belief...

Have a great day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/23/18  
God Has Chosen You

Good Morning to all,

It is a mostly cloudy and foggy 65 here in NJ this morning. It will be a partly sunny day with a slight chance of a stray thunderstorm. The highs will be in the low 80s.

"Then he said; 'The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will and see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. You will be a witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name' " (Acts 22:14-16).

As Paul spoke to the angry mob in Jerusalem, part of his message was "story time..." The Holy Spirit had guided him to recount how he went from being the biggest persecutor of Christians to their biggest supporter, spokesman and advocate. On the road to Damascus, as he explained, "a bright light from heaven flashed around me..." He said, "I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?' " Then Paul ( Saul) posed this question; "'Who are you, Lord?' The answer? 'Go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do...' " (Vs 6-10). Paul continued the story of his conversion to his audience. The essence of it was that he had once been like them, but having miraculously seeing Jesus he had changed. He had once viewed Christians as the biggest scourge against Judaism he had ever seen, and now it appeared that he had been totally wrong. Jesus of Nazareth, risen from the dead had appeared to him. What was he to do? A man in Damascus, Ananias, confirmed the truth to him that he had probably dreaded to hear, but it wound up being one of grace and forgiveness. Maybe Paul did not think of his obedience to Christ as a "conversion," because he continued to worship the same God that he always had, but now, Jesus was in the picture. His experience on the road and subsequent belief and obedience changed his service. Now, here's our part in all of this. When we become Christians, our service changes too. To take this one logical step forward, when we grow and mature in the Lord, our service changes again, as the Lord expects more from us. We have been entrusted with the biggest gift ever given, and we're expected to use it... These are the words of Jesus; "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Lk.12:48). Upon introspection, how much have we been given, and how much has been entrusted to us. As we look at the title of this devotional, God has chosen us....

Have a wonderful day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love  
mark Phil.4:11

5/24/18  
All For One, One For All

Good Morning to all,

It is a clear 59 here in NJ this morning. It will be a mostly sunny day with highs in the low 80s.

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places they should live... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Acts 17:26 & Rom.3:23).

It is obvious that Paul (Saul) came to Christ and to the apostleship in an unusual way. When he had the opportunity to speak to an angry mob of Jews at the end of his 3rd missionary journey, he spoke to them openly of his former life as a persecutor of Christians. Further, he told them why he changed. The risen Savior appeared to him. He had given Paul a mission to be His apostle. "I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal.1:12). Three times the book of Acts relates the events surrounding the conversion of Paul; two of them are in his own words. The conversion of this former enemy of Christians was, without a doubt, the most significant event that took place in the church during the ten years following the resurrection of Jesus...Before Paul of Tarsus became a preacher of the gospel, the church in Jerusalem was on track to become another "sect" of the Jews. As the Pharisees and Sadducees were different ways of being a Jew, many Jewish Christians thought of themselves as Jews 1st and then Christians... It was an unusual thing for a Gentile in the Roman world to become a proselyte of Judaism. Many people thought that becoming a Christian, however, meant becoming a Jew 1st, but God used Paul to declare this to be wrong... This lesson rings out through the corridors of time to us today. Though ethnic Jews were heirs to God's blessings and the gospel went to them 1st, they were equal to Gentiles in that both were lost in sin. Both had to do the same thing to be saved, as is true today. The universality of the gospel is truly amazing. Ethnic and racial barriers meant nothing to God then, and still doesn't. From today's verses, from one blood God made all men and without Christ all are equally lost in sin. We serve a mighty and loving God....

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark  
Phil.4:11

5/26/18  
Saturday Morning Quiz... Rings On Her Fingers And Bells On Her Toes

Good Morning to all,

It is a partly cloudy 71 here in NJ this morning. It will be partly cloudy day with a possibility of thunderstorms. The highs will be in the mid to upper 80s.

This morning's quiz is about jewelry. The Bible mentions rings, earrings, bracelets and chains. You are to fill in the blank with the person who had the jewelry. The answers should ring true, and as always, have fun..

1. The servant of \_\_\_\_\_ presented Rebekah a golden earring and two bracelets when she gave him water.
2. The family and friends of \_\_\_\_\_ each gave him a gold earring to comfort him from the evil that had befallen him.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ gave Joseph a ring and put a gold chain around his neck.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ of the prodigal gave his son the finest clothes and a ring.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ made an ephod from spoils of earrings that weighed 1,700 shekels.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ asked Judah for his signet, bracelets and staff as a pledge.
7. The king \_\_\_\_\_ gave the royal ring to seal a bargain.
8. When he realized \_\_\_\_\_ could not live, a man killed him and took the bracelet from the dead man's arm and brought it to David.
9. The women of Israel sang about \_\_\_\_\_ who put golden jewelry (ornaments) on their apparel.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ told the men to break off their wives' earrings and bring them to him to make a golden calf.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day..... Love  
mark Phil.4:11