

03/02/2015  
Bringing Glory To Him

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward.... It is the Lord Christ you are serving" (Col.3:23).

In doing all we can do for God's glory, and seeking to avoid anything that would be inconsistent with it, we are able to make a great discovery. That discovery is a meaning to life that would be otherwise incomprehensible and utterly impossible... Even the things of life that we find difficult or painful are able to take on new meaning when we view them as opportunities to serve and bring glory to the Lord. I think that we sometimes get lost in the "big ticket" sacrifices we make and forget that God is glorified in the little day-to-day things that we do to serve Him. Today's verse lets us know how a real Christian life is to be led... It says: "whatever you work at, work at it with all your heart..." To bring glory to Him, we must have a willingness to do both the big stuff and the small stuff. Jesus put it this way: "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt.5:16)... We let our lights shine when we do not sacrifice purity for pleasure and maintain integrity between our principles and what we actually do... We glorify Him by keep our promises and following through on our responsibilities. We bring glory to God, when like the Good Samaritan, when we learn to put first things first, in doing whatever needs to be done. As we begin a new week, lets think about what we can do to bring Him glory....

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

03/03/2015  
Catching Your Balance

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices ---- mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law ---- justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former" (Matt.23:23).

Have you ever watched a girl do an exercise in gymnastics on the balance beam? The girl must do some intricate maneuvers on a beam that is just 10 centimeters (4 inches) wide. While doing these maneuvers, she must maintain her balance on the beam. Losing one's balance by either tottering on the beam or falling off, is a severe deduction in points. Here's the science behind how one remains balanced or stable. "An object will remain stable (balanced) if a vertical line from its center of gravity falls within its base" Did you get that? If that line falls outside of the base, the object will topple over. The Pharisees and Scribes mentioned in today's verse were

unstable and therefore, out of balance... They got the giving part (mint,dill, cummin) but did balance it with the more important matters (justice, mercy, faithfulness)... That thing in life that we call balance is one of the most difficult things to achieve. It is so difficult because it entails working on our whole character. There are so many issues involved in being a Christian, and to be a good one we must strive in developing a well-rounded character. The Scribes and Pharisees went wrong in not balancing the "doing" with the "caring..." They always toppled over... Jesus calls us to be balanced in all the important aspects of our lives... Our character must be in harmony with our conduct. If we do not grasp the concept of balancing all the important parts of our lives, we'll fall off the beam every time... More on this tomorrow

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

03/04/2015

It Shouldn't Be A High Wire Act

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (Jn.4:24).

We have all seen and read today's verses. I will take a bit of a different view of them today.. The world puts so much emphasis on the external, that it is driven by it. Just look at the commercials on TV. Almost all the products they sell are about external things like the right car, clothes, cleaning products and foods. One of the ways that we sometimes get unbalanced is when we put too much credibility on actions. When we do this, we run the risk of neglecting to work on the inner spirit that ought to motivate those actions... Perhaps the reason this happens is that the external things are easier to get at and get right. The scriptures teach this: What God wants, primarily, is our heart. If our inner character is not lined up with His character, then our outward actions can be almost meaningless. Today's verses tell us that without question, the truth of our actions is important --- but so is the spirit... Pondering this, as the Lord's people, let's be sure to work on actually being more balanced. We should not view our lives as a 'high wire act..." Tomorrow we'll look at our responsibilities from a slightly different viewpoint, so we can have a more balanced understanding...

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

03/05/2015

Its About Who We Are

"Why you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" "But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete" (Lk.6: 46; 49).

In the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul appears before King Agrippa and tells him about Jesus. His reply is informative to us... "Do you think in such a short time you can persuade me to become a Christian..." (26:28). By this time in Paul's ministry, one of the titles that believers wore and still wear today is Christian... The call to be a Christian is just what the the name implies... We must make it our aim to be Christ-like.... . Another term that the Bible attaches to His people is the call to be a disciple... The word disciple lets us know that goal must be to follow and learn from Jesus. When we do this, we can truly be Jesus' disciples. Another word applied to Jesus' followers is saint. Paul addresses his second letter to the Corinthians by applying the term saint to all believers. The word implies to me that a follower of Jesus must try at all times to be "sanctified" to the Lord. That means pure and holy. Lastly, Paul writes to Timothy and tells him to be an example to the believers... More than just accepting that Jesus is the Christ, a believer is to walk by that faith. The believer needs to make it their aim to live by that faith in Christ. Whether it is Christian, disciple, saint or believer, we are answerable to a higher calling... Its about who we are...

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

03/06/2015  
Looking For Authority

"For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me...." (Matt.6:9).

A Roman centurion came to Jesus on behalf of his servant who was paralyzed and suffering. He realized Jesus' power and related it to his, as we see in today's verse. The Roman army became so strong because of their almost fanatical respect for authority. Literally everything within the Roman culture worked within the framework of those who gave and received orders. The empire flourished when respect for authority was a part of their fiber. It worked the same way with Israel. They got in trouble as a nation when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes..." (Judges 21:25). When the subject is about values and morality, the lines of authority often become blurred. For a Christian, God is the ultimate source through which authority flows. Christian people do good because it is built within them to be like God... The actual use of the word good implies the very being of God. Nations fall because of a lack of authority. I would contend that without God to provide a moral compass through His authority, it is impossible to choose what is right and wrong. When people leave God out of the equation, the absolute worst behavior becomes acceptable. Because God found a residue of goodness within people, He

sent us a Savior... When we take away the authority that flows from God, the pattern of hope, reason and promise fade away. The lesson of the centurion is good...

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

03/07/2015  
Some Fun Questions

I hope that you enjoy today's Bible questions.. Have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who were Noah's 3 daughter-in-laws? (a) Joanna, Keilah, Jannes. (b) Esdras, Sela, Tabeel. (c) The Bible doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What was the sign of the covenant between Abram and God? (a) a rainbow, (b) circumcision, (c) a promise, (d) a handshake.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who said; "Is anything to hard for the Lord?" (NIV) (a) Moses, (b) Job, (c) David, (d) God Himself.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What did Lot offer to the men of Sodom to spare the two angels? (a) money, (b) his 2 daughters, (c) his wife, (d) gold.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. How many wings did a seraph have? (a) 2, (b) 4, (c) 6, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who did the Book of Hebrews call the king of righteousness? (a) Melchizedek, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) God.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What book tells about God giving a name to all of the stars? (a) Genesis, (b) Job, (c) Psalms, (d) Revelation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. In what city did Paul have his hair cut off because of a vow? (a) Nazareth, (b) Cenchrea, (c) Lystra, (d) Athens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. On the 6th day the children of Israel were to gather \_\_\_\_ omers of manna per person. (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who had the first navy mentioned in the Bible? (a) David, (b) Solomon, (c) Hezekiah, (d) Popyeus.

Have a great weekend. Don't forget to set those clocks ahead tonight... Have an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day... Love mark Phil.4:11

03/09/2015  
I AM WHO I AM

"Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them? God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' This is what you are to say to the Israelites; 'I AM sent me to you'" (Ex.3:12-13).

When God appeared to Moses on the mountain, it signaled a return of authority to the descendants of Israel. The sheriff was back in town! When Moses saw a bush perpetually burning without being consumed it was an important event for the calling of Israel and especially for the new covenant between God and spiritual Israel. God was determined to save Israel, and Moses would be His representative. When Moses asked the voice in the burning bush to identify itself for the people, we get the famous words found in my title and verses today... "I AM WHO I AM!" God gave this to Moses as if it were a proper name (it was) and he wanted Moses and the people to know that His authority was eternal... The theory of authority finds credence in God's self-revelation. "Yet He has not left Himself without testimony..." (Acts 14:17). Examination of the Bible leads from the possibility of authority to the fact. The universe had a beginning, and is moving toward a conclusion. Maybe we just need to reflect today on I AM WHO I AM...God is exactly who He claims to be. Jesus is exactly who He claimed(s) to be. The Holy Spirit is exactly who He claims to be... Our moral compass and reason for hope would all just disappear into the air if God was not I AM! These are just some wonderful things to reflect upon today...

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

03/10/2015  
Not The City In Rhode Island

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be the glory in all the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen." (Eph.3:20-21).

Have you ever heard someone use the phrase, "that's beyond your pay scale" when they did not want to reveal something to you? Its a catty remark made by a smug person who may think a bit too highly of him or herself... There are some things in the Bible that may seem to be a bit beyond our pay scale, but getting to know about them is both challenging and rewarding. One of

these things is the providence of God... God's providence is about the fulfilling of His promise to provide for us. In accomplishing His purposes, a lot of what God does may be beyond our knowledge or comprehension... It is encouraging to me, knowing that God's promises are kept without completely understanding just how this providence thing works... I sure don't know much about how the computer I am sitting in front of right now works, but I really enjoy using it. What is truly uplifting to us, is knowing that God is active in the world, and that all will be well in the end. We would be bogged down with fear, hopelessness and uncertainty if it were not for the assurance that God will provide. With that, we are able to take the steps that lie along our path each day.. That path may take a few unexpected turns along the way, but it is enough to know that God is not only waiting for us at the end, but in the meantime, He is providing... Do I comprehend it completely? Probably not... Do I like it? Oh Yeah....

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

03/11/2015

Providence And The "What Ifs"

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body" (1 Cor.12:12).

In one way or another, all of us are involved in the Lord's work. It would be good for us to read and meditate upon today's verse, down to verse twenty.(20) I'm sure we've read it before, but it reminds us of playing our part in the church. Whatever it might be, we ought to have no higher priority than to serve faithfully in the work that is ours to do. Recently in our church, we passed around a clipboard with a list of all our committees. We asked people to look at those committees, and determine which one(s) we wanted to be a part of... Unfortunately, many us are attacked by the dreaded, "what ifs..." Let me lay a few of them on you this morning... "What if my abilities are too small to meet the need?" How about this one... "What if I am unable to do what is expected?" Here's another one... "What if something happens and the nature of my responsibility changes?" Here's just one more... "What if my responsibility is greater than I can bear?" Don't you think the apostle Paul may have had a lingering doubt or two about his ability to fulfill his mission. Here's how he met the challenge.... "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil.4:13) He's saying that we will never be faced with an impossible task in the Lord's work. Why? Because whatever He expects us to do, He will enable us to do. Though we may not know when and how He will do so, we must trust in His providence to keep us working one day at a time....

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

03/13/2015  
What, Me Worry?

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matt.6:34).

Many of you have probably read an issue or two of the satirical Mad Magazine. It features as its mascot, a funny looking character named Alfred E. Neuman. He has misaligned eyes and a gap-toothed smile. Neuman's mantra is "What, Me Worry?" So..... In light of today's scripture, what do you think of that credo? Many of us may demand a good deal more predictability from life than God promised we would have. I know that most of us make plans so that our futures will be safe, happy and secure, but that's not the predictability I'm getting at this morning. Maybe we've got to get a grip on what Jesus is talking about in Matt.6:34. We all might want to know what tomorrow will be like, but all we have is today... The worry that takes hold of us is nothing more than fear of what might happen. Where there is uncertainty, there is also fear. It is a fear that what is going to happen might be difficult, painful or unpleasant... The answer resides in what I have been talking about for the past two days, and that is God's Providence. God's answer to our fears or worries is not in revealing what will happen to us. He simply says: "I will provide..." To me, if this makes sense, it is our trust in the providence of God that takes the worry out of life's uncertainties... I don't think I want to be like Alfred E. Neuman, but I do want to be like Jesus, and He tells me to put it into His hands....

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

03/14/2015  
Some Bible Questions

I hope you enjoy putting your biblical thinking cap on to answer these questions. Have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. To whom did Jesus say, "You did not give me a kiss?" (a) Judas, (b) the sinful woman, (c) Simon the Pharisee, (d) Nicodemus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The virtuous woman in the Book of Proverbs clothed her family in what color? (a) scarlet, (b) blue, (c) yellow, (d) black.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What was the former name for the town of Bethel? (a) Bokim, (b) Luz, (c) Acco, (d) it doesn't say.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which plague the Egyptians experienced was the eighth one? (a) darkness, (b) lice, (c) frogs, (d) locusts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who was hung on a gallows 50 cubits (75 feet) high? (a) Mordecai, (b) Haman, (c) Judas.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What was the name of the first judge of Israel? (a) Samuel, (b) Othniel, (c) Ehud, (d) Shamgar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who was the individual who watched over Baby Moses as he floated among the bulrushes? (a) his mom, (b) his sister, (c) his brother, (d) his aunt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What mother made a little coat for her son every year? (a) Rebekah, (b) Hannah, (c) Leah, (d) Rachel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What type of bird did Noah 1st send forth from the ark? (a) a raven, (b) a dove, (c) a pidgeon, (d) a roc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What was the name of David's first wife? (a) Maacah, (b) Michal, (c) Chaggith, (d) Haggith.

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

03/16/2015  
Prayer That God Will Find A Way

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil.4:6).

After thinking about how God's providence works in our lives, it ought to make a difference in the way we pray... As we mature in the Lord, we ought to take to heart the words in today's verse. Our requests to God should be filled with the confidence that God will do whatever is best for us because we believe His promises... "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us...." (Eph.3:20) It is a wondrous experience of life when our requests are fulfilled, but there is something even more amazing... We all make our prayers with a preference about their outcome, but in reality, we must simply want God to be glorified. We should pray that the Lord will intervene on our behalf, that the sinful designs of Satan will be overruled, and then give thanks for whatever outcome



that God decides is the best... I believe that this helps us put the world's problems in a better perspective, and releases us from worrying about tomorrow's uncertainties, while keeping us doing what we can for the Lord. All of this culminates in our faith that God is both good and powerful, and that He will provide us with what we really need... The words of Don Moen's song, "God Will Make a Way" will ring true... "God will make a way where there seems to be no way, He works in ways we cannot see, He will make a way for me. He will be my guide, Hold me closely to His side, With love and strength for each day, He will make a way, he will make a way...."

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

03/17/2015

As He Sees Us - A Different View

"Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account" (Heb.4:13).

Abraham Lincoln is credited with the quote: "You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time. But you can't fool all of the people all of the time." There is some literary doubt that Lincoln actually said this, but the quote is noteworthy nonetheless... I find it interesting to compare it with today's verse from the Book of Hebrews. It says that God knows everything there is to know about us, both on the outside and inside. The outside and inside are not covered in Lincoln's saying. While contemplating the breadth of God's knowledge of us may be a fearful thought, it should be a soothing and encouraging one also... Even our closest friends can only know us in an imperfect fashion. God's knowledge is such that He will never misunderstand us. Not only that, but He sees us exactly as we should be thought of, with all the facts being taken into consideration. Here's the real kicker... We ought to want to know ourselves in this way, and with a bit of reflection, it is good to see ourselves as God sees us.

When we see ourselves this way, we will often see things that need to be changed for the better... Why? Even though making these changes might be hard or even painful, and even with the imperfections, what God sees about us is that we are worth saving. As with Robert Frost's taking the road less traveled, (The Road Not Taken) we can agree with his conclusion... "And that has made all the difference...." More on this tomorrow....

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

03/18/2015

Isn't That Special

"Jesus loves the little children,  
All the children of the world.  
Red and yellow, black and white,  
They are precious in His sight.  
Jesus loves the little children of the world

C. Herbert Woolston

I haven't sung that children's song in a very long time. By the way, Woolston was from New Jersey. We, as God's children, though we may have our imperfections and flaws, are loved by God. We're loved so much that He created us in His love and gave His Son to save us. It should be reassuring to us that God and His Son see us as having worth and value. In this equation, we are to view ourselves as being valuable to God, and if we do, we will think, act and live differently. We must elevate our thinking to the point of seeing the good things that God wants to do with us, and be grateful for the honor He has bestowed upon us in His Son Jesus. In Jesus, there are no inferior people... Our little song says that all His children are precious in His sight. We all have the need to be reconciled by grace in the same way... "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ, have clothed yourself with Christ" (Gal.3:26-27). If we go on to verse 29, we find that we are all heirs... Knowing this should surely make a difference not only in the way we view ourselves, but in the way we act. As we are involved in our daily activities this week, it should encourage us to contemplate that we are precious in His sight. Since we are so special to the Lord, we must live like the special people that we are. As we soak all of this up we might say, "isn't that special...."

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

03/19/2015

The Privilege Of Being God's

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" ( 1 Pet 2:9).

All of us have a time or two when we get down on ourselves. Perhaps it is because we have disappointed someone we care about, or maybe we may even feel that we have let God down.

Today's verse is one of those scriptures that speaks about our true worth to God. When we accept Jesus into our lives, we become special to Him and His Father... We become chosen people... By being created in His image, Jesus says this: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than them?" (Matt.6:26) We all like being valuable... Another cool thing about being God's is that He always takes into account what He sees in our hearts. (1 Sam.16:7) That

sets the tone for how we ought to view those around us. My mom always wanted to get value for her money. That word value should be a part of our relationship with God. A Christian's self-image is based on that special relationship with God, and not on worldly values. I think that this all culminates in a healthy and realistic view of ourselves..."Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you" (Rom.12:3). To not think of ourselves with too high or low a view, is to see ourselves as God does. Its about the privilege of being God's....

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

03/20/2015

And The Word Was God

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning" (Jn.1:1-2).

Magic and superstition were pervasive in the worlds of both the Old and New Testament, and are hardly absent from the present world. When a shaman (magic man) reinforced what he said with mysterious rituals, his devotees believed that the words took on a life of their own and that they moved through time and space to bring about what he had directed. You need to read Deuteronomy 18:9-13 to see what God thought about these detestable practices. We show residues of superstition today with the reading of horoscopes and the use of terms like "fate, karma, gesundheit, or knock on wood..." Fear of words lingers even among the scientifically sophisticated. Superstitions die hard.. The apostle John was drawing on the power of words when he began his gospel..."In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning." John goes all the way back to Genesis 1:1... "In the beginning..." For the ancients, and even us today, a word or a name was more than a convenient tag. A spoken word was and is a living symbol of a person, thing, concept or action. Here is the really neat part of Jn.1:1-2 and of my devotional this morning... John made a declaration that the Word (Jesus Christ) was unmistakably attached to the being of God, just as surely as your name identifies you... Jesus was the source of creation and the very essence of eternal power. When the name JESUS is spoken, it is synonymous with His authority. In the person of Jesus, the Word of God manifested itself in human form... That Word is the very grace, love and promise of God...

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

03/21/2015

Some Bible Questions

I hope you enjoy testing your Bible knowledge this morning. I'll do my best to challenge you.  
Have fun....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Because of his sin, Achan was stoned in what valley? (a) Achor, (b) Kidron, (c) Gehenna, (d) Death
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who was the sorcerer stuck blind by Paul? (a) Simon, (b) Elymas, (c) Hecuba, (d) Jabbah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. After his shipwreck, Paul swam to what island? (a) Crete, (b) Patmos, (c) Melita (Malta), (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What was the name of the wife of both Nabal and King David? (a) Michal, (b) Abigail, (c) Sheba, (d) Vashti.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Which of Joseph's brothers was left behind as a hostage when they returned to bring Benjamin back to Egypt? (a) Gad, (b) Levi, (c) Asher, (d) Simeon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In order to win the battle with Amalek, Aaron and Hur helped Moses by doing what? (a) fighting, (b) shaking their rods, (c) holding up his hands, (d) blowing horns.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who was Zipporah's very famous husband? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Aaron, (c) Moses, (d) Eli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who was the wife of Lapidoth? (a) Rahab (b) Deborah, (c) Miriam, (d) Dinah
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Why was Lapidoth's wife famous? (a) she helped the spies, (b) she was the first female judge, (c) she was David's daughter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In what Bible book do you find the quote; "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout?" (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Song of Solomon.

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

"The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to FEAR the Lord our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today" (Deut.6:24).

There are three things that often go unappreciated in a world that is obsessed with individual rights and freedom of expression. They are: authority, obedience, discipline. Now don't get me wrong.... I am alright with individual rights and freedom of expression, but they must co-exist with the three things I just mentioned. In today's verse, Moses, who has been given the authority over the people, is reminding them about obeying the LAW that they had just received and their responsibility to it. In the world of human affairs, those in charge are often tainted by human imperfections; it is never this way in the kingdom of God! With God, we are not given any "arbitrary" laws to obey. The ruler of heaven and earth has no master blueprint to keep folks from having fun... Simply put, He knows the behaviors that hurt people, and He forbids them. In today's verse, Moses tells Israel, "so that we might always prosper..." As it comes from God, "thou shalt not" might actually mean "do yourself no harm..." Sometimes, people may feel deprived in the short term, but in the long-term, obedience to God results in blessed and noble lives. Christians ought not wait for heaven to enter the joys of godly living, but rather experience them now... Today's world offers sins which have a seasonal appeal that we must resist, just as Moses did. "He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time" (Heb.11:25). Given the nature of the God we serve, the wise and the blessed obey Him....

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

03/24/2015  
Coming To Our Senses

"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and I am here starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father...'" (Lk.15:17-18).

The famous parable of the Prodigal Son is a heart-warming story about a young man who made some bad decisions, but also made a comeback. We all love comebacks...I won't go into the details of the parable except for the verses I have picked out today. To me, what is so telling about the parable involves the reality check... You and I can have these moments of clarity too.

It is extremely difficult to do what is right if we don't see the truth about ourselves. There are times when all of us have allowed a bad decision affect our course of action, and that course may take us down a path we shouldn't be on. That's exactly what the Prodigal Son did... The part of today's verse that I underlined is a moment of clarity... A reality check... In sports, its often called a "gut-check." The young man changed his course of action for the better when his thinking about himself changed. It changed because he looked at who he really was. I believe that this sounds familiar to us because it has happened in our lives. "But when he came to his

senses...." That coming to his senses represented a truthful look at himself, and that look led to actions that were more beneficial. A more beneficial life is contingent upon looking at ourselves to see our value, and then to live accordingly. When we downgrade ourselves in our own thinking, we will live in a way that is consistent with that thinking. Lets have more moments of clarity and reality checks, so that we will live the life that the Lord wants us to. Its all about coming to our senses...

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

03/25/2015

Be All That You Can Be

"He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created" (Jas.1:18).

Have you ever seen people at an athletic contest waving around one of those silly Styrofoam mitts in the shape of a one (1)? They are obviously trying to let people know that their team is #1... God doesn't wave one of those around, but many times in scripture He lets us know that we are His #1 creation. As far as living things go, we are a kind of firstfruits of all He created... Our worth to God is inherent in just being who we are... "He chose us through birth through the word of truth... " We are His creatures. Having been created in His image, (Gen.1:27) we are each personal beings. Any way you slice it, personal beings are worth more than non-personal ones... We may have spent some time squandering the talents He blessed us with, but nonetheless, we have a value that is ours simply because we were created in His image. In part of The Sermon On The Mount, (Matt.6:25-34) Jesus lets us know that we're worth more than the other animals, so we must take a long hard look at ourselves in terms of what we are worth to the God who made us! When we fall short of God's expectations, we actually devalue not only ourselves but the one who made us in His own image. Now Here's the really cool part... If we see ourselves as children of the King, we will live the right kind of life. Since God wants us all to be all that He created us to be, He will help us to reach that goal. Its up to us to seek, ask and knock... Then, in the eyes of the Lord, we can be all that we can be....

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

03/26/2015

Practice Toward Perfection

"Everyone who has hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 Jn.3:3).

Carnegie Hall in NYC is a mecca for many performers. So much so that it has led to this old joke... When someone on the street in NYC asked for directions to the Hall, the answer was.... "Practice, Practice, Practice...." As corny as the joke is, it highlights just what one must do to become a performer worthy of appearing there. A piano student may yearn to become a concert pianist worthy of performing in the Hall. In the meantime, that student learns to become more proficient through constant and daily practice. If the person has talent, he or she becomes better and better through that practicing. A Christian, if worthy of the calling, yearns to become more and more like Jesus and to one day be in heaven with Him. In the meantime, there is the practice, practice, practice.... Jesus presented us with the example and the motivation to be like Him, but the doing part is up to us. The more we practice the commands and principles of our Lord Jesus, the more we will appear to be Christ-like... It doesn't take a nuclear physicist to get the drift about the things that need to be practiced. We must devote ourselves to the Word and pray. We need to love one another to the extent that we will do good things. After we do all this stuff, we have to do them again, again, and again. You know.... The practice word... The Holy Spirit will empower us to live more like Jesus and to look more like Him as the light of the world. Now we're ready for Carnegie Hall...

Have a great day.... Let His Light Shine Through You Today... Love mark Phil.4:11

03/27/2015

### A Warning About Our Influence

"And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18: 5-6).

If we stop to reflect, we can all remember a relative, teacher, friend or church member that has had a positive influence on our life. As I zero in on the church, it is not merely those in a role of authority who must be mindful of their influence on the church community. Each member of the church family is equally responsible to reflect the moral behavior taught by Jesus. It is only then that we are able to fulfill a part of our mission by being good examples and mentoring our brethren along the right path. In today's two verses, Jesus is very forceful that believers do not use their influence in an improper manner... If it sounds like a harsh rebuke, I think it is meant to. The audience to whom Jesus was speaking knew what millstones were, and they could range in weight from 20 or 30 pounds to hundreds of pounds. The image of one of those tied to a person thrown into deep water was graphic. It is a tangible threat that reinforces the importance of guiding children into lives of righteousness. We should know that our influence as Christians is a powerful one in a world that needs better role models. We ought to be conscientious about our impact on others and not disperse our influence in a careless or haphazard manner. Lets all focus on this: Our influence has a power of its own to be either

constructive or destructive, so let's come to a logical and moral conclusion. Which one do we want it to be?

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

03/28/2015  
A Few More Questions

I hope I get your brain warmed up today with a few Bible questions. So put on your thinking caps and have a little fun....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What was Nebuchadnezzar's son's name? (a) Xerxes, (b) Sydnious, (c) Belshazzar, (d) Nahash.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "The Lord has made everything for its own purpose. Even the wicked for the day of \_\_\_\_\_. (a) evil, (b) plenty, (c) bliss, (d) satisfaction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Hannah was the mom of Samuel. Who was Hannah's husband? (a) Jesse, (b) Elkanah, (c) Ishvi, (d) Eli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. To Whom did God tell to go and marry a prostitute? (a) Zechariah, (b) Obadiah, (c) Micah, (d) Hosea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What Bible character saw a scroll flying in the sky? (a) Zechariah, (b) Obadiah, (c) Micah, (d) Hosea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Two men in the NT had the same name. One was a very poor man and the other a friend of Jesus. What's the name?. (a) Matthew, (b) Lazarus, (c) Zacchaeus, (d) Nicodemus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When Peter was released from prison, he knocked at the door of the gate. Who answered? (a) Lydia, (b) Damaris, (c) Rhoda, (d) Martha.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When shipwrecked on Malta, Paul stayed with the chief official. Who was he? (a) Publius, (b) Aristarchus, (c) Titus Justus, (d) Ananias.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What is the name of the man who settled in the Land of Nod? (a) Seth, (b) Enos, (c) Cain, (d) Noah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to \_\_\_\_\_; so he was added to the 11 apostles. (a) Bartholomew, (b) Barsabas, (c) Matthias, (d) Justus.



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

03/29/2015  
The Stronger And The Weaker

"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak" (1 Cor.8:9).

The apostle Paul is dealing with a tricky issue here in this chapter of 1st Corinthians. It is whether or not it is okay to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols. There is nothing inherently wrong with it as Paul explains in verse eight. Strong Christians can readily see this, but the ones with a weaker conscience don't get it. Paul lets us know that since Christ died for the weak as well as the strong, that the stronger ones must be a positive influence on the weaker ones. It is as if Paul is making this a kind of stewardship that a stronger Christian must assume. The actions of the strong, however innocent, may still serve as examples that may lead others from the faith... Negatively influencing a brother or sister in the Lord to violate one's conscience is equivalent to sinning against Jesus... "Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall" (1 Cor.8:12). When we think only of ourselves, it may make us blind to the possible repercussions that stem from our actions... It is individualistic perspective that ignores the needs of others and Christ's great lesson about guiding others through love to salvation. Here in 1st Corinthians chapter eight, Paul reaffirms Christ's teachings, by reminding stronger Christians to act as stewards or mentors to the weak. Paul vowed, that even though his actions were innocent and acceptable, if they caused his weaker brother to stumble, he would not do them again. Jesus put it this way: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk.9:23). It may be a hard lesson to learn, but I think that the hard is what makes it great...

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

03/30/2015  
The Blessing Of Influence

"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb.10:23-24).

Sometimes we view life as a sort of caste system. The higher someone is on the "food-chain," the more influence they have on society. We can learn the folly of this belief if we look into the complex workings within various ecosystems. We tend to look with awe at the top members because of their power, but let something happen to a member of that system further down on the chain, and watch how the whole eco-family get rocked! Most church congregations are made up of folks in the middle and their influence should be beneficial rather than detrimental. We should never underestimate the power of our influence because God has expectations for us that we should aspire to... The apostle Paul wrote this to Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tim.4:16). If that seems a lot to lay on someone, it is... The best influence we can exhibit is our positive example of Christian living, a commitment to the truth, and wisdom in congregational affairs. These all help in preparing someone else for stronger faith in Christ. Position within the church is less important than a commitment to its purpose in helping to guide and assist others to find fellowship in Christ. To abandon one's influence in strengthening the body is both foolish and selfish... There is a blessing for us when we consider ourselves as messengers for Christ...

Have a great day... Do Good and Give God the Credit... Love mark Phil.4:11