

06/01/2016
Wolf, Wolf, Wolf

"They keep saying to me. 'Where is the word of the Lord?' Let it be fulfilled now!" (Jer.17:15).

I am sure that all of you are familiar with Aesop's fable, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf..." A young boy who was tending sheep got lonely, so he ran to the edge of town crying, "wolf, wolf!" The townspeople came out quickly to help him, but there was no wolf. The boy was so glad that his cries worked to bring out the people that he tried it again and got the same results. We all know the rest of the story as a real wolf then appeared. The boy cried "wolf, wolf" in an even louder voice, but the people did not want to be fooled again, and did not come out. The only happy character in this story turned out to be the wolf. The human response to hearing a repeated message is to eventually tune it out, and unfortunately for Jeremiah, the people took that approach. Jeremiah kept warning the people that the Lord would punish them for their infidelity, but it did not happen immediately, as we see in today's verse. It was easy for Jeremiah to prophesy the wrath of the Lord coming down on the people, but the Lord never told him just when it would happen...With Jeremiah's request for swift justice against God's people, he asked God to direct and save him... Christians face the same problem Jeremiah faced. Jesus foretold of His triumphant return more than 2,000 years ago, and some folks write off the fulfillment of the prophecy because it hasn't happened yet... People who do this are as foolish as those in the days of Jeremiah... "They will say, 'Where is this coming' he promised?" "God is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night..." (2 Pet.3:4; 9-10). God is faithful to His Word, and keeps the promises made to His people... Christians should find the ultimate comfort in knowing that God will keep His promise of salvation... I don't think we can hear this message enough...

Have a wonderful day.... Go about doing good.... Love mark Phil.4:11

06/02/2016
O The Heartburn

"I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me..... So the word of the Lord has brought me reproach all day long. But if I say, 'I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name,' his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones" (Jer.10:7-9).

I hope my title doesn't lead you to think that I'm going to write about acid indigestion this morning. Please don't reach for the Roloids.... Bullies have been around forever. When you were a child did you know one? Were you ever intimidated by some one to the extent that it caused you anxiety? Poor Jeremiah was bullied, persecuted, and ridiculed by those he was

ministering to. From his youth, he had served as the voice of God, and his relationship with the Lord gave him a deeper understanding of both the Lord's will and fury... The pressure and persecution of speaking the truth caused the prophet to vow not to speak the word of the Lord ever again. But then came "the heartburn..." There was just no containing what needed to be said... Jeremiah described it this way; "His word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones." He had to send the word of God to a world that needed it! Shame and hatred encouraged him to hide his message, but courage and confidence brought it to light. So here we are in 2016. The Lord has protected and guided us with his truth so far, and we should be willing to do the same for Him... We must be constantly reminded of just how big our God really is. We ought to be willing to share our personal faith and relationship with the Lord to those in need. This sharing usually begins more with the way we act rather than what we say, but it should evolve. Living and speaking God's message (the heartburn) ought to be less about us and more about the One who stands faithfully with us....

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Mark

06/03/2016
Send The Light

"There's a call come ringing o'er the restless wave; Send the light! Send the light! There are souls to rescue there are souls to save: Send the light! Send the light! Send the light! the blessed gospel light; Let it shine from shore to shore! Send the light! the blessed gospel light; Let it shine..... forevermore"

Send The Light by Charles H. Gabriel 1890

On many levels, the people of Judah were resistant to the message of the prophet Jeremiah. They did not heed the message and paid the price for it. Perhaps Jeremiah reminds us that sometimes the hardest messages to deliver are the most important ones. "When the priest Pashhur, son of Imer, the chief officer in the temple of the Lord, heard Jeremiah prophesying these things, he had Jeremiah the prophet beaten and put in the stocks of the Upper Gate of Benjamin at the Lord's temple" (Jer.20:1-2). Jeremiah got a beating and was put in stocks for delivering the message, an inglorious fate for one who gave the people God's words.... But as we found out yesterday, the words of the Lord were in Jeremiah's heart like a fire. He ignored what might happen to him physically and emotionally, and spread the Word. Many, both then and now, would put off living and speaking God's message, but we ought to follow Jeremiah's example. In lieu of a verse today, I used the words of a familiar song written over 125 years ago.

One of the verses references a vision that the apostle Paul had (Acts 16:9) of a man from Macedonia. Paul concluded this; "After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel there" (V 10). The gospel cannot work its power if it is never spoken to those in need of its assistance. Just as the

apostles were called to spread the Word in the 1st century, the Lord beckons us to "Send the Light" today... Because there are those that need to hear it, we shouldn't be ashamed to speak (Rom.1:16) and live the Word of God...

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

06/04/2016
Some Impersonators

This quiz is about folks in the Bible who impersonated someone else for a particular purpose.
As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What king disguised himself in order to consult with a medium? (a) David, (b) Saul, (c) Josiah, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 2. Who fooled Jacob by posing as her sister? (a) Leah, (b) Rebekah, (c) Zilpah, (d) Bilhah.
- _____ 3. Who pretended to be a madman in order to escape from King Achish? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Josiah, (c) David, (d) Saul.
- _____ 4. Who disguised himself while going to battle against the forces of Pharaoh Neco of Egypt? (a) Jehoahaz, (b) Jehoiakim, (c) Zedekiah, (d) Josiah.
- _____ 5. What king's wife disguised herself in order to consult Ahijah? (a) Jeroboam's, (d) David's, (c) Zimri's, (d) Asa's.
- _____ 6. Who posed as her husband's sister while in Egypt? (a) Rebekah, (b) Rachel, (c) Sarai, (d) Rubeous.

TRUE OR FALSE

- _____ 7. Joab had a clever woman of Tekoa pretend to be a widow to gain David's sympathy.
- _____ 8. Some Gibeonites fooled Joshua by pretending to be ambassadors from a distant country.

_____ 9. King David was confronted by a prophet posing as a wounded soldier.

_____ 10. According to Paul, Satan masquerades as a angel of light.

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

06/06/2016
No Lost Love

"Therefore this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: 'They will not mourn him: Alas, my master! Alas my sister! They will not mourn for him: Alas, my master! Alas, his splendor! He will have the burial of a donkey ---- dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem' " (Jer.22:18).

On the schoolyard, nobody feels sorry for the bully when someone finally stands up to him and his time comes... Why? Because their actions brought about their consequences... Jehoiakim was the last king of Judah, and he was ruthless and merciless against his own people. He used them as slave labor, taxed the poor into starvation, and used the taxes he gathered to build a luxurious palace for himself. He was that bully, and it was time for God to straighten this out once and for all... As we see from today's verse, God would show Jerusalem what would become of those who used others for personal gain... When he died, Jehoiakim's body was dragged through the streets rather than having a royal funeral... As Christians, we should learn to set our own personal desires aside. God's issue with selfish desires is its defiance of the greatest commands given. Most of us know what Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40 when asked about those greatest commands... First, we are to love the Lord completely, and second is that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. Our lives would be greater remembered if we spent our time on earth in service to others. As with Judah, and Jehoiakim in particular, the consequences of a selfish and sinful life can cause one to suffer eternal separation from God... We must always be conscious of the results of how we treat others. It shows how we actually care about Jesus' greatest commands... "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is Love" (I Jn.4:8).

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

06/07/2016
Larry-Boy And The Rumor Weed

"A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends" (Prov.16:18).

Its strange how some things we have always heard to be true actually aren't. Napoleon was actually 5 ft. 7in. tall, which was over the average for his time...Imagine if those misconceptions were about our faith. The people of Judah had to learn the hard way about operating on the misconceptions they heard from the false prophets who led them down the wrong paths... For those of you who are fans of the VeggieTales, my title today is a 1999 release by exactly that title. Alfred the Asparagus, after a busy evening, tells the teacher at school that he needs to go home and "recharge his batteries," meaning that he needs to rest. Jr. Asparagus and Laura Carrot go around telling everyone that Alfred is really a robot. Through a series of events that only VeggieTales are able to spin, everyone believes that Alfred is indeed a robot and treat him badly. The Rumor Weed feeds on the gossip and spreads its menacing intentions all over town. The movie does a great job of teaching children about the negative effects of gossip and how it can be combated with truth... Maybe a good title for this devotional today might have been "The Trickle Down Effect..." Even those who are not directly involved with an incident can be duped into believing untrue things about it. Because they listened to untruths and spread them as accepted facts, the people of Judah went down a road they wouldn't be able to easily retreat from. The same can happen to us today. Perhaps the best part of the film is that in the end, when the truth is revealed, Alfred forgives all those that believed that he was a robot... Another good lesson for another time...

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

06/08/2016
Real Or Counterfeit

"Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon, for they are prophesying lies to you.' 'I have not sent them to you,' declares the Lord. 'They are prophesying lies in my name' " (Jer.27:14-15).

From what I can guess, counterfeiting has been around for a long time. Ever since the days of trade and commerce, if something is of worth or value, it will likely be counterfeited for resale.

From what I've heard, gemstones were among the oldest commodities that people counterfeited. Gem hunters who are unaware of the signs of this fakery are usually swindled by the counterfeiters, who charge full price for their items. Today, everything from money to the autographs of famous people are counterfeited... Here's the kicker.... By the time a person realizes that his or her item is a fake, the seller is long-gone. Unfortunately, as we see in today's passage, there were those in the days of Jeremiah who counterfeited the Word of God. Verse 15 finishes like this; "Therefore, I will banish you and you will perish, both you and the prophets who prophesy to you." The false prophets gave the people a false sense of security and promise, which led them further away from God instead of closer. These counterfeit messages

destroyed God's people... Today, there are many voices out there when it comes to the world of religion. These voices will tell us many different things or share different ideas when it comes to our soul and eternal destiny... There are even some voices that will try to convince us that God is not real. We must always make sure the teachings we receive are in line with what the Lord has delivered to us through His Spirit-inspired Word... "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil" (1 Thess.5:21). Lets continue these thoughts tomorrow...

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

06/09/2016
Point Of No Quick Return

" 'Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,' says the Lord" (Jer.29:8-9).

At the end of the first summer we were married, Jane and I made our way back to college, from NJ to Ark... Following a map with Jane as my navigator, we made our way across VA, going down some roads we had never traveled. At 3:00 AM, we found ourselves at the gates of Thomas Jefferson's home in Monticello. Obviously we were hopelessly lost, but after backtracking and a few minor changes, we made our way back to the right highway and on to our destination. We still laugh about this today, though I don't think we were laughing that morning... Judah had gone way off course, and many of them were under captivity by the Babylonians. God's advice was for them to stay on the right course, and not do what is described in today's verses. The false prophets worked to convince the people that their 70 year captivity would soon be over, but there was no going back quickly. God had already decided that His people were going to be punished... It's sad to think about the countless numbers of Christians who have chosen the pathway of sin over the one back to the Lord. Like the people of Judah, they have chosen to be enslaved in sin rather than live in the freedom of the Lord.... This kind of spiritual enslavement can be difficult to extricate oneself from. When believers choose to surround themselves with the wrong types of people, they can become mired in a spiritual swamp. This separation from God could last eternally if wandering Christians don't repair their relationship with God. The turmoil we face when we are lost in sin should encourage us to long for a deeper relationship with God. The return is possible, but only if we get back on the right road.... Monticello is a great place to visit, but not at 3:00 AM.....

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

06/10/2016

Listening To the Voices - The Right Voices

" 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen you' " (Jer.29:11-12).

The people of Judah had a choice to make, just as we all have a choice... We inherit family traits both by genetics and experience. These traits may be mindsets and or actions. Each of us has a choice to be a positive influence both on our families and friends in the way we conduct our lives. Again, just like the people and last kings of Judah, we can sometimes give in to the other voices telling us how to live our lives and how we should view God's Word. Today's verses drip with hope. Even though they are in captivity, the people are told what will happen when they make the correct choices... God had plans for the people of Judah, just like He does for us... "plans to give you hope and a future..." Their choice to be included in God's plans for that future were simple.... "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you." To make those choices easier for us, God has provided numerous scriptures to remind us of its importance. I would guess that all of you can find many of them, but to make things even easier, I have found and selected five (5) of them for all of us to take with us today... "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: if anyone is preaching a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned" (Gal.1:8-9) "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Tim.3:16-17) "For the word of God is living and active..." (Heb.4:12). "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Matt.24:25). "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psa.119:105). They should do it....

Have a great day.... Go about doing good.... Love mark Phil.4:11

06/11/2016

Extortion, Taxes, And Bribes

As you may guessed from the title, today's quiz is about taxes, extortion, and bribes found in the Bible. You may not have known there there was so much of it. As always, have fun...

TRUE OR FALSE

_____ 1. Samuel's two sons were notorious for taking bribes.

- _____ 2. Matthew, a tax collector, climbed up into a tree so that he could view Jesus.
- _____ 3. Felix kept Paul in prison, hoping that Paul would bribe him for release.
- _____ 4. Joseph advised that the Egyptians be taxed 20% of their produce in order to prepare for the famine to come.
- _____ 5. Menahem, king of Israel, taxed the Israelites in order to pay off Pul, king of Assyria.
- _____ 6. Jesus sent Andrew fishing in order to get money for taxes.
- _____ 7. Eli warned the people of Israel that having a king would mean having taxation.
- _____ 8. Jesus used a Pharisee as a contrast to the humble tax collector.
- _____ 9. Matthew was also known by the name Levi.
- _____ 10. According to the law in Exodus, all adult Israelites were to pay 1/2 shekel each at census time.

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

06/13/2016
Lets Make A Deal

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says: 'When I bring them back from captivity, the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words:' 'The Lord bless you, O righteous dwelling, O sacred mountain' " (Jer.31:23).

The program, "Lets Make A Deal," has been on TV since 1963. The studio that hosted the show had a capacity of 350 people, and it became so popular, if you requested tickets, it would take 2 to 3 years to get them. If you have watched the show, the premise is for contestants to be given a prize and then precede to make deals for possibly better ones. Some folks get better things and others get booby prizes... For the sake of today's devotional, this classic game show reminds us of how a deal can either make or break us. We unknowingly agree to all sorts of deals by the choices we make, and they can carry the same consequences as those in the game show. Today we'll look at how the Lord decided to make a new deal with the people of

Judah as they were returning from a captivity in Babylon. This time, the deal would require different conditions with His people... In verses 23-28, the ground work is laid. You may want to read these verses today to get a better flavor of the deal... In the Book of Genesis, God created a contract with Abraham to bless all nations in his bloodline. Because a contract needs both parties to abide by it, it was destroyed by the sins of the people... Just as the Lord offered a solution to the people of Judah, even after their terrible sins, God had a new deal for them. God saw their infidelity as grounds to create a new covenant with His people. The people's sin destroyed the first covenant, and as a result God offered a New Deal (a new covenant) in Christ. This is where you and I come into the deal... With all of this in mind, tomorrow we will look at our covenant with the Lord...

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

06/14/2016

Planting And Building Anew

"The days are coming, declares the Lord, 'when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of plants and animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,' declares the Lord" (Jer.31:27-28).

That magical time of spring brings an opportunity for life to begin again. This cycle of life and death brings the chance for life to start anew each spring with the seeds from the prior year. The farmer with an experienced hand at planting will know the exact time and place to plant a seed to give it the best opportunity to grow. The old has been cleared to make way for the new and has provided the much needed seed to initiate the process. In this section of the Book of Jeremiah, God has used the fall of His people to start fresh with the seeds they left behind... Sin destroys our innocence and connection with God. When we make the willing and conscious decision to do what we know is wrong, we lose the innocence we had. Because God is perfect and cannot be in the presence of sin, our sins create a distance between us and Him... Here comes the cool part.... God has offered a solution: a new covenant through Christ. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gives us the chance to repent of our sins and choose to follow God. God then forgives our sins and provides us with a new life through His Son... Becoming a Christian means we have accepted this new covenant in Christ, and if we are willing to keep it, we will receive the reward He promises... Its all about that planting and building anew....

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

06/15/2016

A Matter Of The Heart

" 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel,' declares the Lord. 'I will put the law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people' "
(Jer.31:33).

The heart has become a symbol of love and passion. In it, we store our hopes, dreams, feelings and emotions about the things we love. Some people love the team they root for so much that they paint their faces and dress in the colors of that team. Some folks have a passion for travel and fill the social media with pictures of their adventures... On the negative side, some fill their hearts with hatred for someone or something and must express it strongly and loudly. NEWS FLASH! God had (has) bigger plans for our hearts as we see in today's verse from Jeremiah...

The times were changing, and the qualifications to become one of God's people would no longer require a bloodline. The Lord was changing His conditions for those who would receive His righteous reward... The people God alludes to are those who have been in the church since the Day of Pentecost "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt.5:17). To be a child of God no longer requires the necessity of being born into the bloodline of Abraham. The promise is fulfilled through the blood of Jesus... Those who choose to write the law of God on their hearts and minds will have access to the forgiveness God promises. God has extended salvation to those who believe and obey, as sin can be wiped away through that belief and obedience... Now that is truly a matter of the heart...

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

06/16/2016
The Everlasting Contract

"I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me" (Jer.32:40).

As a teacher, each year I would sign a contract for the next year. In it were stipulations about what was expected of me for the coming year, and what I would expect from the school. Contracts are agreed to with the knowledge that both parties have to live up to the stipulations in them. In the Bible, a contract is referred to as a covenant. God had made a covenant with Abraham. Judah was breaking the contract, and the Lord used Jeremiah to reveal the new plan to His people...(vs 37-41 explain it) In proper prophet form, Jeremiah gives them insight into the coming eternal kingdom of God... This must have been confusing to the people who were, as usual, expecting an earthly kingdom of God. God clarified the new relationship He would have with those who chose to follow Him. While the people may have been confused, they were certainly buoyed by the hope of a better contract... You and I are living under that new

covenant, and we should find a level of comfort in knowing that our relationship with God is everlasting... Even when our faith wanes a bit, God is still consistently faithful to us. The promise we make to Him is that we will place the Word of God deep within our hearts and live it out in our lives. It is up to us to strive each day to develop God's heart within ourselves, so that our reverence toward Him will grow stronger and stronger... Study and prayer should lead us to recognize and live according to that one heart and one way God established. As our reverence grows, our desires will evolve into wanting to please Him and not ourselves... That completes the everlasting contract.

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

06/17/2016
Growth Takes Time

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither is he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow" (1 Cor.3:6-7).

We all know that it takes a certain amount of time for a germinated seed to grow. This might be a hard lesson to accept when we are sharing the gospel with others. As is prevalent in today's society, we want to see immediate results of our sharing the gospel with those we care about. The truth might be that we may never see the seed of the gospel take root. It might be that the one in which the seed of the gospel is planted in is not willing to accept the covenant. They might not be ready to agree to that binding contract. It might be like the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, that demonstrates the different kinds of soils in which the seed is sown... It might be hard to think that we might not get to rejoice with those we have shared God's Word with... In today's verses, Paul comes to terms with this in his own way by understanding that his job wasn't to force growth for his own purpose. He understood that it was his job wasn't to grow people, but to share the Word of God that was written in his heart so that they could grow at the right time. Paul knew this and shared it with us. We are to never stop witnessing for our Lord, but the miracle of growth is in the hands of our Almighty God... I guess that the miracle of birth and growth is on my heart today...

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

06/20/2016
Learning From The Rechabites

"This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah. 'Go to the Rechabite family and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the house of the Lord and give them wine to drink' " (Jer.35:1-2).

Do you remember playing tag on the playground as a child? Countless miles have been covered over the years on playgrounds everywhere in this game of pursuit that required speed and agility to catch and tag others. If you got tired from your efforts, or needed to catch your breath, you could always choose a base. The base was a safe place where you could not be tagged... It kind of served as a safe spot for those who needed protection. God has always been a safe place for those needing protection from the chaos of the world, and the Rechabites knew this. The Rechabites had a long history with God's people. They were descendants of the Kenites, the people of Moses' wife. They were nomadic by nature, but lived among the Hebrews because of the protection it provided for them by being God's people... Jeremiah brought these people into the house of the Lord, which was an honor to anyone who came to this sacred place. The Rechabites knew the house of the Lord as more than a meeting place however. It was the ultimate "base..." The safe place. Today, all who choose to become God's people and honor Him, can find that same wonderful umbrella of safety. Ultimately, we have the awesome safety and security of the salvation He provides today. The world can throw some pretty difficult storms our way, and they can sometimes feel overwhelming. Instead of choosing to turn to the comforts the world offers us as a false perception of safety and comfort, we should turn to God who offers us hope, comfort, and security for eternity... The Lord offers this protection for all those who would follow Him... We can't be tagged here...

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

06/21/2016
Learning From The Rechabites

"But they replied, 'We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command:' "Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine' " (Jer.35:6).

This devotional is not about the evils of drinking wine... The verse before this one I've used today, was yesterday's scripture. You might remember that the Rechabites were invited into the house of the Lord by Jeremiah's words from God: "Then I set bowls of wine and some cups before the men of the Rechabite family and said to them, 'Drink some wine' " (V 5) This set me to wondering... If the Lord knew that the Rechabites would not drink the wine, which He surely did, why did he offer it to them? If you read down through verse 11, you will get the rationale of the Rechabites for not drinking wine. I think that God wanted to show His people what faithfulness in the face of temptation looked like... It was a great moment of clarity... It was "lesson" time... I hope that this wonderful story provides a lesson for each of us too. God's Word doesn't just give us instructions, but also provides a framework for our identities in Christ... More

than just a book of do's and don'ts, it was written to protect and assist us in finding who God intends us to be. Temptations and sin can make it hard for us to find our identities in Christ because we don't always want to sacrifice everything to Him. We might want to hide pieces of our old life away so that no one sees them, but doing this doesn't transform us into someone greater... By giving those things up to the Lord, we actually find greater freedom in the truth he provides. Obedience to Him should characterize us and protect us from the temptations we face.... How about a shout out to those Rechabites.... Atta boy, Rechabites... Great lesson for us....

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

06/22/2016

More from The Rechabites - A Recipe For A Cake

" 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words,' declares the LORD. 'Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me' " (Jer.35:13-14).

Baking a cake has more to do with science than art. In theory, you should always have a cake if you combine the right ingredients in the proper amounts in the correct order... Here is when the recipe comes in... It gives you the directions to make sure that your experiment in baking becomes a cake and not a gooey bunch of batter. Any deviation from the recipe may result in a mess not worthy of having icing put on it... All the good bakers will assure you that following the instructions will lead you to baking success. The exact same is true of our spiritual lives. We can keep our lives from being an undercooked blob of sinful batter if we follow the example of the Rechabites. Their obedience to their father was faithful, unwavering, and unquestioning... It wasn't God's desire for the people to be mindless in their following, but rather to have faith in God's ability to deliver them from the troubles they faced as a nation... God had to send the people prophets because they would not obey His instructions. In the Rechabites, God showed the people, and us, to understand what real obedience looked like... Some 2,600 years later, the same message rings out loud and clear to all of us. To become the cake He wants us to be, it's all about the right ingredients in the proper amounts in the correct order. The icing on the cake is that we get to spend eternity with him... Happy baking...

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

06/23/2016

Obedience - A Tough Road To Follow

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt.7:13-14).

Here's the question of the day... Why do God's followers have such a hard time obeying and sticking to His commands? As we looked at the example of the Rechabites in the Book of Jeremiah the past few days, the Lord has provided an illustration for us as a reminder to be diligent in following the Bible's teachings. From His Sermon On The Mount in today's verses, Jesus lets us know about the difficulty in traveling down the right road in very stark words... God rewards those who trust in Him and His Word, but as we have found out raising our own kids, the reward system doesn't always work. God has offered a path to salvation to all those who obey, but that path is a straight and narrow one. Even though the pathway is clear, many refuse to submit themselves to God's direction... Just becoming a Christian requires faith in God's existence, in Christ's deity and triumphant return, and in the Lord's willingness and ability to save us through Jesus' blood. When we fully trust God, we see the Bible as more than just a book of rules, but as a guide to our eternal home. The teaching of the Rechabite's forefathers and their unwavering example, led them to safety and provided an example for the Judeans and us... It is all about putting our complete trust in the Lord to lead us to comfort, safety, and security. Obedience and the tenacity to do His will might not always be the easy road, but on the balance sheet of life, the bottom line shows us that it is worthwhile... Lets all travel down that road...

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

06/24/2016
Rule Changes

"And it is not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest when God said to him: 'The Lord has sworn and you will not change His mind: You are a priest forever' " (Heb.7:20-21).

So... How are you about rule changes? If there is some rule out there that you do not like, why don't you go ahead and change it? What do you mean you can't? Why not? Its because you are probably not in a position of authority to go around changing rules ----- that's why.... The powers that change rules in professional sports get together before each season and hash out any rule changes that might make their sport better or more efficient. The last few years have been marked by the ability of a team to question certain calls on the field. In football the official goes into a tent and watches the play from different angles. In baseball all the questioned calls are reviewed by a panel in New York. In regular life, to change a rule one must have the

authority to make that revision. I might be able to change certain rules within my home, but I can't change the speed limits on the highways or the price of gasoline... Today's verse talks about a very important rule change that God has made. The time-honored rule for many generations had been priests according to the Levitical conditions. I recently wrote some devotionals about Samuel, who was a priest. A rule change of this magnitude could only happen by the highest of authorities. It doesn't get any higher than God Himself... God's seal of approval for this change is an oath in which He announces to the entire universe that His Son is a priest forever and ever! Maybe all rule changes don't turn out well, but this one certainly did. The weaknesses, shortcomings, and faults of the priests are not present in Him. Where they were lacking, He is capable... Jesus is superior in every way.. He is so much higher than human priests that a rule change from the highest possible authority was approved for us to enjoy living under His leadership... The best rule change of all time...

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

06/25/2016

Weddings, Divorces, And Dowries

The Bible makes mention of many weddings, divorces, and dowries. Lets test our knowledge about some of them... As always, have fun....

- _____ 1. Who made a wedding feast before giving the wrong bride to Jacob? (a) Teman, (b) Laban, (c) Reul, (d) Dishon.
- _____ 2. What did Saul require from David as a dowry for his daughter Michael? (a) 500 shekels of gold, (b) his loyalty, (c) 100 Philistine foreskins, (d) it doesn't say.
- _____ 3. Which prophet prompted the Jews after the Babylonian captivity to give up their foreign wives? (a) Ezra, (b) Nehemiah, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Hosea.
- _____ 4. Where was the wedding in which Jesus turned water into wine? (a) Bethany, (b) Cana, (c) Jerusalem, (d) Nazareth.
- _____ 5. According to John in the Book of Revelation, who is the bride of Christ? (a) Mary Magdalene, (b) The Holy Spirit, (c) The Church.
- _____ 6. Who made a 7 day marriage feast, but never married the woman he intended? (a) Samson, (b) Jacob, (c) David, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 7. Who purchased the property of a woman's mother-in-law to obtain her as his wife? (a) Esau, (b) Jacob, (c) Ari, (d) Boaz.

- _____ 8. To marry Rachel, how many years did Jacob have to serve Laban? (a) 10, (b) 12, (c) 14, (d) forever.
- _____ 9. Which of the Gospels records the parable of the king's wedding feast for his son? (a) Matthew, (b) Mark, (c) Luke, (d) John.
- _____ 10. Who arranged Ishmael's marriage? (a) Abraham, (b) Sarah, (c) Hagar, (d) Abimelech.

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

06/27/2016
Being A Prophet May Be Tough

"This is what the Lord says: 'Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine, or plague, but whoever goes over to the Babylonians will live. He will escape with his life; he will live.' And this is what the Lord says: 'This city will certainly be handed over to the king of Babylon, who will capture it' " (Jer.38:2-3).

"A penny saved is a penny earned"
"The early bird catches the worm"
"Haste makes waste"
"The pen is mightier than the sword"
"A picture is worth a thousand words"

If I gave a you some time, you could probably come up with a lot more famous words of wisdom like those I've just written... As wise as a proverb might be, it is useless unless it is communicated to those who are in need of its special message. Under normal circumstances, we can sprout these off to anyone at just about any time, but what if there are some obstacles preventing us from delivering an important message. Even the most skillful orators can find difficulty in finding the right words when it comes to reaching an audience with a message of wisdom... We may fret and worry about making sure we have the perfect moment to share important news with someone instead of actually just sharing it... Today we have the prophet Jeremiah in this most difficult situation, as he has some news from the Lord to share with the people that they don't want to hear. Since the words are from the Lord, Jeremiah cannot wait until what he thinks is the most opportune moment to communicate the unpopular message. You might want read down to about verse 20 to get a fuller gist of what is happening... "This

man should be put to death. He is discouraging the soldiers who are left in this city, as well as the people, by the things he is saying to them. This man is not seeking the good of the people but their ruin..." (V 4) Its kind of like watching one of those survivalist shows on TV. We sit back on the safety of our recliners and postulate on what we might have done in a particular situation... In real life, sharing important words of wisdom with others might not find us on that comfortable recliner. This week, we will share some of this together. I wish I could draw a picture to make it easier to understand, after all, it might be worth a thousand words...

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

06/28/2016
The Truth Might Hurt

"They took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud" (Jer.38:6).

Jeremiah had some tough news to deliver to Zedekiah. Jerusalem had already survived a siege by the Babylonians once, and their success led the people of Judah back into the enslavement and mistreatment of the Babylonians. The prophet's message from the Lord foretold of the fall of Jerusalem after a second siege by the Babylonian threat. He also informed Zedekiah that he would be the last king of Judah, and this did not go over very well with the king. The princes of Judah begged for Jeremiah to be killed for his prophesies, and with Zedekiah's permission we find the prophet's fate in today's verse. What an inglorious end for a prophet of the Lord. He would be left to die in a sewer. While speaking, or sometimes even living the truth isn't always the popular thing to do, it is the right thing! Those who believe in the Word of God have a responsibility to uphold the truth contained in it, just as those in the days of Jeremiah could not.

Do you remember the famous line from the movie "A Few Good Men?" When Tom Cruises' character demands the truth from Jack Nicholson's, Nicholson responds by saying, "You can't handle the truth..." There are those in the world that despise the truth of God's Word. Because of this, the Book of Hebrews describes it this way: "For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (4:12). If we want a rainbow, we must deal with the reality of the rainstorm that causes it... The truth can hurt sometimes... Despite this, we must deliver it both in word and in deed. Lets make sure it is delivered with the love that only the Lord shows His children...

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

06/29/2016

Out Of The Pit

"My Lord the king, these men have acted wickedly in what they have done to Jeremiah the prophet. They have thrown him into a cistern, where he will starve to death when there is no longer any bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Cushite, 'Take 30 men from here with you and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the cistern' " (Jer.38:9-10).

The TV show Deadliest Catch is about Alaskan crab fishermen in the frigid Bering Sea. It gets its name from the dangers involved in the job. Though the men do everything to stay as safe as possible, there is the chance that one of them can be thrown off the boat into the icy waters. In water that cold, hypothermia sets in within seconds, and everything grinds to a halt on the boat in order to save the man who has gone overboard. Jeremiah has suffered such a fate by being thrown into a water-less and muddy pit and he will die. Help comes from a strange source as we find in today's verses. Ebed-Melech ignores his low stature in the house of the king and actually risks his own life in his petition for Jeremiah... The compassion of a lowly foreigner spared the life of the messenger of God. As Christians in 2016, we must be as compassionate as Ebed-Melech in trying to save those that are lost in sin... Of all people, Christians should know firsthand how sin threatens eternal life for those that are lost in it... Sin is that swampy pit dragging those who give in to temptation down in its depths. When we want to see someone saved from the depths of sin, we must begin where Ebed-Melech did ---- by petitioning to the king... It ought to be a priority to ask God for His assistance and influence in reaching out to someone consumed by the world. The Lord provides the saving, but only when we are determined to serve as Ebed-Melech did... From cold, wet, and hungry to safety in the arms of Jesus... Lets help get folks out of the pit....

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

06/30/2016
Advice For A King

"Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, 'This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says: if you surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, your life will be spared and this city will not be burned down; you and your family will live. But if you will not surrender to the officers of the king of Babylon, this city will be handed over to the Babylonians and they will burn it down; you yourself will not escape from their hands' " (Jer.38:17-18).

How would you react if someone that is important in your life said to you.... "we need to talk?" These are words we probably don't want to hear because we mentally start preparing for the worst. They are often a sign of a deeper issue we know is already present. We hate those words because they may force us to reflect on a portion of our lives we know to have flaws...

Whether they come from a friend, parent, or significant other, we know they have something really important to tell us. In today's verses, the prophet Jeremiah, recently rescued from a muddy sewer, had one of these moments with King Zedekiah. He was laying out on the table everything God had revealed to him... The words of Jeremiah were a life or death ultimatum for Zedekiah and his family. After laying out the options, the prophet begged the king to listen to God's word. Because Jeremiah respected the king, he delivered the message with a sense of urgency... Every human being has a choice as to where they will spend eternity. As with the king, if people refuse to acknowledge God's Word, they will face eternal separation from the Lord... However, belief and obedience to God's Word leads to eternal life. Christians understand how critical this single decision is, but don't always know how to share it with others. The gospel is the good news of Jesus' sacrifice that provides eternal life, extended to those who are willing to accept it into obedience... The message is urgent, but must be delivered with concern and care....We might even look at it as advice to a king...

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