

03/01/2017

### Conscience And Feelings As An Authority

"Even though once I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief" (1 Tim.1:13).

As we continue our search for the ultimate authority in our lives, we come to a couple of things that many folks may unfortunately accept. As we look at today's verse, we find a time in the apostle Paul's life that he acted in accordance with his flawed conscience. Using one's conscience or their feelings as a guide to behavior has some built in defects.

First of all, they may serve as a guide, but their quality as a guide will be determined by the quality of the person being guided. I think this means the notion that our thoughts and feelings are a part of our own system of awareness might be misinformed or misguided. Lets take a look at an interesting scripture; "This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything" (1 Jn.3:19-20). A tender conscience that sees an injustice may be a good thing. but it is not an infallible thing. Someone may wrestle with their feelings of not being good enough, but the verses from I John tell us that God holds the trump card... He is greater than our hearts and knows everything. At

the end of the day, these verses from I John stress that we must trust God and place our faith in the Gospel message, not trust ourselves as the last arbiters of truth, right and "the godly way." When Paul, as Saul, persecuted Christians, his faulty conscience told him that he was doing the right thing. Paul's new mantra became this; Whatever is not of faith for us is sin, and its a good one when a person is wrestling with their conscience. As this devotional comes to an end, let me throw out one little caveat... As faulty or flawed as the conscience may be, it is sometimes a good nagging voice that approves or disapproves what we are contemplating doing. We should listen to the voice, but not give it the final say. That belongs to God and God's Word.

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

03/02/2017

### Is The Majority The Authority?

"Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are giving testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit" (Ex.23:2).

As we come to last devotional about authority, we find this interesting verse from the Book of Exodus. It would seem like the verse is wrapped around showing favoritism to the rich over the poor, but I see an overriding theme in it. It starts out by saying not to follow the crowd in doing wrong...We live in a society where within our legislative and judicial system, the majority gets to have the last say. The system has worked in America for over 250 years, but in reality, does the majority always make the right decision every time? I believe that today's verse is an important one in that it tells us to resist the temptation of going along with the crowd in making a decision, just because there are more of them... In the days of Noah, the majority was lost. "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 is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matt.7:13-14). It would seem here that Jesus lets us know about majorities.

When all is said and done when it comes to a final authority, I believe that the verdict is crystal clear. Just because many people believe something, the merits of what they believe must be examined before simply going along. It is my opinion that a mob of people often feel more empowered because of their numbers, rather than their reason for gathering together. The words found in our Spirit inspired Bibles are there to furnish us into every need. The writer of

the Book of Hebrews, at the very beginning, tells us that God had spoken through the prophets in the past, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things... (1:1-2). Let's heed the words of the psalmist saying this; "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (119:105).

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

03/03/2017  
The Golden Image

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold 90 feet high and 9 feet wide.... As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace" (Dan.3:1; 5-6).

Not too long after Daniel explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him and was elevated along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to high positions in his court, the king has a huge gold statue erected. I wouldn't doubt that it bore a resemblance to him... When the music played within the kingdom, everyone was supposed to bow and worship the statue. All of us, from our youths on up have been put into a position where we were expected to do something because everybody else was doing it, even if it was the wrong thing to do... Daniel, along with his three friends, though now rather high on the Babylonian food chain, were put into that position. This kind of dovetails from yesterday's lesson about going along with the majority. When put into these positions in our lives, how did we react? Did we go along with the masses, or stick to our core beliefs? This is all about standing up for what is right, or as the credo of a good friend of mine reminds us, "do right for no other reason than because it is right..." It is critical to point out at this time that the young men in the story from Daniel have come to an important crossroad in their lives. Do what the king says, even though it flies in the face of their beliefs, or die. In all probability, doing right when those around us are not, will not end in our physical death, but the consequences can be even more deep. Why did the three young men do the right thing we ask? Simply put, their consciences were now in alignment with God's will and not their desires, or the whim of a king with too much power at his command... We have a great Old Testament story to lean upon when we are faced with conform/don't conform situations. If these young men are not quite a powerful enough reminder for us, let's remember all the situations in which Jesus did not conform to what people wanted or expected from Him.... Let's all be careful about the golden image...

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

03/04/2017  
A Bible Birdwatch

As you can see from the title, today's quiz has to do with birds in the Bible... Carefully consider each question because I wouldn't want any of you to wing it. As always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What Bible book says that anyone who scorns his parents will have their eyes pecked out by ravens? (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In Revelation, what bird goes around crying, "Woe! Woe!" (a) a raven, (b) an eagle, (c) a pigeon, (d) a pterodactyl.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In Song of Solomon, the lover compares his beloved's eyes to what bird? (a) a pigeon, (b) a hawk, (c) a dove, (d) a sparrow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. This man compared his days to eagles swooping down on their prey. (a) Job, (b) David, (c) Elijah, (d) Elisha.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. On what day did God create birds? (a) 2, (b) 3, (c) 4, (d) 5.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who had a dream about birds eating out of a basket on his head? (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Pharaoh's baker, (d) Pharaoh's butler.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. On Mt. Sinai, God told Moses He had carried the Israelites out of Egypt on the wings of what bird? (a) an eagle, (b) a dove, (c) condor, (d) hawk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. This Babylonian king had a dream of a tree where every bird found shelter. (a) Belshazzar, (b) Cyrus, (c) Nebuchadnezzar, (d) Darius.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who had a vision of a lion with eagle's wings. (a) Ezekiel, (b) Daniel, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In the NT, he had a vision of a sheet filled with four-footed animals, reptiles and birds. (a) Peter, (b) John, (c) Paul, (d) Timothy.

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

03/06/2017  
A Gotcha Question

"Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?"  
(Matt.22:28).

Do you know what a "gotcha" question is? Many years ago at a pizza place near our home, the proprietor, Frank, knew that I was a teacher. Almost every time I walked in to buy something, with his rich Italian accent he would propose to me what he thought was the ultimate "gotcha" question.... "Professor.... Which come first, the chicken or the egg?" If I would answer, of course he would defend the opposite answer. After a while, I just smiled. The men who posed the question in today's verse were the Sadducees, who along with the Pharisees were an outstanding sect of the Jews in the time of Jesus. The major difference between the two sects was that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection... The question posed in the verse came after a hypothetical scenario that they spun about a woman who had consecutively married seven brothers. She married the first and he died, without producing any children. According to the Law, she married his brother. This rapid succession continued until the last brother died, and then she died. You might want to look at Deut.25:5 to see where their information was coming from. After this outlandish story, today's chicken and egg question arose. The purpose of the question was not to learn, but to involve Jesus in what they thought was a hopeless explanation. On that same day, (Vs. 15-22) the Pharisees and Herodians asked whether it was lawful to give tribute (taxes) to Caesar or not... Another "gotcha" question... This same guile is the motive today in some questions that are asked of us about our faith. The Jehovah Witnesses, who come door to door, have a "gotcha" question or two in their repertoire designed to alter your faith. In following up on last week's series about authority, I would like to share with you some of the ways in which we can defend our faith. By the way, its not cheating to read ahead.... Gotcha....

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11  
03/07/2017

### Why The Gotcha Questions

"We know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (Matt.22:16-17).

I put the "gotcha" question in dark print this morning. In this question, the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him (Jesus) in His words" (Vs.15). Just as with the Sadducees a few verses ahead, they were attempting to make Jesus look bad by asking a question that was tricky and seemingly impossible to answer. I guess you might call the Sadducees the modernists of Christ's day. Their faith was one that was filled with denials. The Sadducean faith denied a bodily resurrection, immortality, personal retribution, and the existence of angels and spirits... The modernists of today deny the miraculous deeds of God and Jesus. The word "myth" is often used to explain away the virgin birth of Jesus and His many miracles... They exalt human reason above divine revelation, and refuse to accept a God bigger than themselves. The Pharisees and Sadducees believed that they were leading the right kind of life, and we know how Jesus handled their feeble attempts to exalt themselves and denigrate Him and others. Even though some modernists maintain a semblance or form of godliness, they deny the power...When the apostle Paul writes to Timothy about them, here's the description; "There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of God, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God ---- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them" (2 Tim.3:1-5). There is no sustenance to satisfy the longings of the human soul here! Because we want to be Christ-like in our lives, for the next day or two we'll look at how Jesus handled this. I believe it will make us stronger....

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

03/08/2017

### The Reverse Gotcha

"Jesus replied, 'You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. But about the resurrection of the dead ----- have you not read what God said to you....' " (Matt.22:29-31).

So after the Sadducees proposed their "gotcha" question about the woman who married seven brothers in succession, Jesus lays a "gotcha" of His own on them. Just to refresh your memory, the Sadducees were one of the prominent religious groups of the day and were also a part of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Among their flaws was that they didn't believe in the resurrection, so their question was to bamboozle Jesus and make Him look foolish. Another flaw was that they did not know who they were messing with. Jesus' reply contained three reasons why their question was a bogus one, and they're pointed out in today's verses. When it comes time for us to defend our faith, it would be good to know these reasons... Number 1: You are in error because you do not know the scriptures... If the Sadducees had known their own Old Testament Law, they would have known a number of passages teaching the resurrection. (Dan.12:2; Job 19:25-26; Psa.16:10 & 23) One of Satan's deadliest weapons revolves around one's ignorance of the Scriptures... As it did then, and does now, this ignorance continues to hold millions in darkness

today. Jesus was very clear when he said this; "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (Jn.10:31-32). No one can do better than what he knows. Jesus also said this; "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (Jn.5:39). One of the biggest delusions in the world today is a sole dependence on human reason for guidance, instead of a knowledge of the Scriptures... (Read 1 Cor.1:18-19 & 2:5) Tomorrow we will look at the other two reasons that Jesus was able to take the Sadducees supposed "gotcha" question and blow it out of the water. Those reasons will help us with our faith today...

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

03/09/2017

### The Final Gotchas

"You err because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God... At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage" (Matt.22:29-30). "Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" ((Acts 26:8).

As we finish up this short series about the way Jesus dealt with those who tried to entrap Him, we come to His further explanation of why they were wrong. As a quick review, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection, had tried to make Jesus look foolish with an elaborate scenario about a women who had married seven brothers in succession. Their big "gotcha" question was about whose wife she would at the resurrection.... Yesterday we saw that Jesus told them you err because you do not know the Scriptures. Next he tells them (and us) about the power of God... In the above verse from the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul is being examined by Herod Agrippa. This part of his explanation as to why he is a Christian revolves around the power of God. When the omnipotent power of God is recognized, it is certainly easy to believe in His ability to perform any other supernatural work. After all, look at the miracles Jesus performed. They are so numerous that space doesn't allow me to list them all. God's power to give another life is no more incredible or wonderful than His power to give us this life... If man does not live again, then God toils to no gain and operates a plan that ends in a disappointing failure, so all reason is on the side of the resurrection. The gotcha guys third error was that they did not understand the resurrected life... People will neither marry nor be given in marriage; but they will be like angels in heaven...The Lord will give us new bodies. "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body" (Phil.3:20-21). According to what we read, the resurrected state will far surpass our fondest dreams... The Christian's hope is that of the resurrection. There are so many reassuring passages in our Bibles about our final and eternal resting place. Perhaps it would encourage us all to look, read and meditate upon them soon. Try these; 1 Cor.15:35-55; 1 Thess.4:13-18; 1 Cor.15:12-18.... This life is good... The next life is better....

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

03/10/2017

### Even Good Guys Mess Up

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to the rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink' " (Num.20:7-8).

In making their way across the wilderness to the Promised Land, the community of Israelites ran out of water and complained bitterly to Moses and Aaron. Moses went to the Lord, and as we see from today's verses, God gave them instructions about how to get the water for the people... No doubt, Moses was angered and disgusted at the complaints and grumbling of the people, but that was no excuse for what happened next. Instead of doing it God's way, he had to get his pound of flesh out of the people. "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock? Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out and the community and their livestock drank" (Vs.10-11). One would have thought that Moses did the miracle by his own power as he struck the rock instead of talking to it as God had instructed. Moses and Aaron learned their lesson the hard way, as God told them that they would not get to enter the Promised Land. What happened there is an important lesson for each of us today... It is important for those who want to please the Lord. First, the honor and glory always belong to Him, but the matter extends further... God is glorified when His people look to Him for guidance. How are we all doing in that department? People hallow God when they are obedient to Him. Are we doing OK there? I believe that God sees it as an affront when a person unilaterally decides how worship is to be rendered or what kind of things actually honor Him. The only way His people can know what He wants in worship, is to listen to His voice through the Word... It really matters what Christians do when they assemble for worship. The way Christians sing or pray or break bread in remembrance matters. The good guy, Moses, was presumptuous... He took credit for bringing water from the rock, and struck the rock with his rod when God told him a word was good enough. The presumption of Moses ought to be a lesson, or even a warning to Christians. It should be a reminder that they ought to offer to God the kind of praise He has prescribed... Even good guys mess up.

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

03/11/2017

### Look At The Birdie - Again

This week's quiz is going to be about birds again. Don't get up in the air in answering these questions about our feathered friends, and of course, don't fowl up.... As always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. At Jesus baptism, the Holy Spirit took the form of what bird? (too easy for choices)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In what parable were greedy birds involved? (a) lost sheep, (b) shrewd manager, (c) sower, (d) talents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In what book is a woman called "my dove, my perfect one?" (a) Psalms, (b) Ecclesiastes, (c) Song of Solomon, (d) Revelation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What book warned that a bird would act as a tattletale, and carry your words to the king? (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Revelation.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. In Psalm 147, what young birds are fed by God when they call to Him? (a) ravens, (b) doves, (c) eagles, (d) sparrows.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. This prophet said that God will protect Jerusalem like "birds hovering overhead." (a) Ezekiel, (b) Isaiah, (c) Zechariah, (d) Micah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. According to Leviticus, this must be done to every bird used for food. (a) remove wings, (b) pluck feathers, (c) remove the head, (d) drain it of blood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. According to the Law, what birds are considered unclean fowl? (a) long-beaked, (b) most scavengers, (c) most birds of prey, (d) b & c.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. How many of each specie of bird was Noah supposed to take into the ark? (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) 7.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What bird, though it had no storeroom or barn, did Jesus say He would feed? (a) raven, (b) dove, (c) sparrow, (d) pigeon.

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

03/13/2017

What, Me Worry

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (KJV Matt.6:27); "Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11?" (NAS Matt.6:27); "Who you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" (NIV Matt.6:27).

For you MAD magazine aficionados, What, Me Worry was the credo of its fictitious cover boy, Alfred E. Neuman. He was a freckle-faced, front-tooth missing, smiling, big-eared, one eye drooping mess, that everyone seemed to latch on to. I don't mean to make light of this week's important topic, but by the tone of today's verse, which I quoted in three (3) different Bible versions, maybe I do. Though it may not be with an Alfred E. Neuman attitude, Jesus devotes nine verses from the Sermon On The Mount to the subject of worry. The KJV says take thought, while the NAS and NIV render our topic as worrying or just plain worry. The KJV talks of adding a cubit to our stature, while the other two references say adding a single day to your life... Reading verses 25 to 34 can give us a better flavor of Jesus' teaching here. In context, Jesus was teaching against undue solicitude for food, shelter and clothing, but I think it goes much, much deeper. This principle of living life free from the tension of worry is to be applied to all our needs and problems. Lest we think this is some isolated teaching of Jesus that popped into His head for a moment in that famous sermon, it is taught in the rest of the New Testament also. Last night at evening services, I led a song written by Don Moen in 1980 entitled, God Will Make A Way... The scriptural backdrop is Isa.43:19, and here are the words: 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 new day, He will make a way, He will make a way. Maybe along with me, you'll be singing this song all day long. I'll finish this devotional with one of my favorite scriptures.... "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:6-7).

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

03/14/2017

"Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Pet.5:6-7).

As we continue on with this series about worry and anxiety, it almost seems as if we live in an anxiety driven world. At every turn we see the furrowed brow, the set jaw, the anxious stare, or the nervous pace... Young people worry because they are not older, while older folks worry because they are no longer young. The educated are burdened by knowing too much, while the uneducated worry because they know so little. "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (Eccl.1:18). The rich are worried because they have too much, while the poor are burdened by their lack of things... Jesus' teaching about worry in the gospel of Luke is preceded by the parable of the rich fool. After a rich man produced a very large and profitable crop, he decided that he needed to build bigger barns to store it, and then take ease. Instead of bigger barns, he needed a bigger heart... Some worry about the future while many lament over the past, and on and on it goes. I may have gone overboard with some of my examples, but the fact remains that too many folks are steeped in worry, while today's verses provide the antidote... When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He promises us that at the right time, He will lift us up. Verse seven (7) of 1 Peter 5 is especially poignant, encouraging and uplifting... "Cast your anxiety on Him because He cares for you..." This may sound silly, but we shouldn't worry about that which we cannot control and shouldn't worry about that which we can help. Idle hand can become the devil's workshop, so we should take heed of the words found in Eccl.9:10; "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." When we seek and find Jesus, we have the ultimate caregiver... Lets use Him every day...

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

03/15/2017

### One Day At A Time

"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining for what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil.3:13-14).

As we continue this series on worry, we come to that yesterday, today and tomorrow thing. If the apostle Paul had allowed his past to rule him and his behavior, he would have never accomplished the things that he did. We cannot alter, adjust or change anything we did in our past. If we, too, have made mistakes in the past, we should derive what wisdom we can from them, get forgiveness for them, and forget them... Forgetting is one of the finest arts... In today's verses, Paul talks of forgetting what is behind and straining for what is ahead... He attributed the mistakes of the past to ignorance and pressed on to a brighter future. The Spirit within us will conquer any worries which might come from the past. My title today is One Day At A Time, so lets get on with it. We originally started this series with the teachings of Jesus about worry in Matt.6:25-34. He finishes the treatise with this statement; "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Vs 34). If we look at the beautiful logic in all of this, the simplicity is amazing, for the past is gone and the future has yet to come. Trying to live in either will only serve to detract from the present. Unfortunately, life becomes unbearable to some because they try to live it in the whole lump. Lets make one thing clear as we finish. God doesn't want us to be "Bubble Boy." We must live in the world, so His teaching is not about isolation or idleness. We all want to have a bright future, so the best preparation one can make for that is to do what needs to be done today, and do it well. One Day At A Time.... We'll conclude this series tomorrow....



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

mark

03/16/2017  
Acceptance And Finding Peace

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things" (Matt.25:21).

We have all heard the "lemons into lemonade" philosophy. Can it work? All of us are not blessed with a plethora of talents or abilities, but the Lord in the Parable Of The Talents from which today's verse is taken, expects us to use them well. We are not supposed to be like the one-talent man (Vs.24-25) who buried it for fear of losing it. Fanny J. Crosby (1820-1915) was blind from the age of 6 weeks, but became one of the most prolific gospel song writers (over 8,000) of all time. She testified this; "I am the happiest soul living. If I had not been deprived of my sight, I would never have received so good an education, nor cultivated so fine a memory, nor have been able to do good to so many people." Is that making lemonade out of lemons or what? The writer of the Book of Proverbs put it this way; "For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is" (23:7). Curing worry is not an outside problem; it is an inside job. The ability to take a misfortune and turn it into a blessing is a wonderful mental outlook of life. Lastly, the only way to get out of that vicious cycle of worry that we may ensnare ourselves in, is to find an inward peace by accepting God completely. I am afraid our worries are often outward symptoms of a more deep-seated ailment, that being too weak of a faith in our Lord... The faith that accepts God at His Word, His commands and His promises, will rally to our aid in diminishing worry... We must all make sure that our concept of God is not too small. Sometimes, especially in the time of misfortune, its all right to ask this question; "How big is my God?" What's the result of this verse? "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil.4:6). THIS! "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Vs. 7). Acceptance And Finding Peace...

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

03/17/2017  
Getting Too Comfortable

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women who invited them to sacrifice to their Gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor" (Num.25:1-3).

The Israelites were within shouting distance of the Promised Land here in the 25th chapter of the Book of Numbers. God had delivered them from their Egyptian oppressors. He saw to it that they had food everyday in the form of manna, enough water, and even quail from time to time. They had clothing that did not wear out and He helped them to defeat their enemies. It is against this backdrop, with the Promised Land near, that the men began to engage in sexual immorality with Moabite women. They even went as far as sacrificing to the gods of Moab. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. There is no indication that the women of Moab were more attractive than their own women. There was also plenty of experience that God was much

more powerful than those earthy gods. So here's the big money question... Why did they do these things? I think I know... Whenever folks become comfortable, reasonably prosperous and secure, they have a tendency to abandon self-restraint. While on the plains of Moab, the Israelites reached such a state of affairs. An easy sensuality became the pathway into the abandonment of better judgement. It is this better judgement that is the wellspring of honesty, fairness, justice, and all the virtues that make for civilized, orderly living. Here's the kicker! When sensuality becomes the chief pursuit, and it doesn't always have to be sexual, it commonly means the abandonment of faithfulness to God... The structure of families and societies begin to unravel when people get too comfortable with their lives and a kind of boredom creeps in. In today's world it may start with stuff like money and possessions that cloud peoples minds and pull them away from God. Lets be sure that success breeds appreciation of God rather than thinking we did it on our own. Satan sets the idols before us, just waiting for us to snap at them. All that we have comes from the Lord.... Lets not get too comfortable....

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

03/18/2017

I've gone to one of my favorite Winnie the Pooh characters to find this week's quiz topic, the donkey. So... Don't get stubborn about answering these questions, and if you get one right, don't bray about it. As always, have fun.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What prophet of Moab had a talking donkey? (too easy for choices)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What future king was looking for lost donkeys when he ran into Samuel?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who gave his irate brother 20 donkeys as a good will gesture? (a) Jonathon, (b) Jacob, (c) Esau, (d) Lot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What prince was riding on a mule (1/2 donkey) and got his hair caught in an oak tree?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who took his wife and sons and set them on a donkey when he returned to Egypt, his boyhood home?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What future wife of David rode out to meet him on a donkey when she pleaded for her husband's life? (a) Ahinoam, (b) Abital, (c) Abigail, (d) Michal.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who used a donkey to carry the wood he was using to sacrifice his son?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who sent her servant on a donkey to inform Elisha that her son had died? (a) Widow of Zarephath, (b) Shunemite woman, (c) Rubeous, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What prophet predicted that the Messiah would enter riding on a donkey? (a) Isaiah, (b) Jeremiah, (c) Zechariah, (d) Micah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What is the only gospel to mention Jesus riding on a donkey? (a) Matthew, (b) Mark, (c) Luke, (d) John.

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

03/20/2017

Getting Too Comfortable

"While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 'What do you think about the Christ?' 'Whose Son is He?' " (Matt.22:41-42).

The question that Jesus asks the Pharisees in today's verses comes at the end of a series of questions they had asked of Him. As we have already noticed here in the 22nd chapter of Matthew, their questions, along with those from the Sadducees, were meant to trap Him into saying something that would not only make Him look foolish, but to deny His deity... The question He asks them in today's verses, "what do you think about the Christ, whose Son is He" were of great importance back then, and of even greater importance today... The question is the cornerstone of faith and the hope for the world. "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph.2:20). When the apostle Paul opens his 1st epistle to Timothy, this is the way it starts; "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim.1:1). Today's question is so related to man that he must stop to think about it. We can not be ambivalent about it in any way... The skeptic who denies Christ cannot leave the question alone because the thought of Him being all He claims to be is disturbing and alarming... To be quite truthful, we cannot leave it alone either. To skeptics it arouses a fierce spirit of opposition, but to believers it offers a hope beyond our wildest expectations... "What do you think of the Christ? Whose Son Is He?" This has been a battleground for centuries... This week, we'll take a closer look at the questions posed in today's verses. Hopefully we will all come to a better understanding of our intimate relationship with God and His Son.

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

03/21/2017

More Of Who Jesus Is

"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He? 'The Son of David,' they replied" Matt.22:42).

We will revisit the question Jesus asked of the Pharisees here in the 22nd chapter of Matthew... I guess it was kind of a double question, but they are very closely related. The Pharisees chose to answer the later one about whose Son He was by replying this way; "The Son of David..." Were they right? When the apostle Paul writes his letter to the Romans, this is its beginning; "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God ---- the gospel He promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendent of David" (1:1-3). As far as the human nature of Jesus was concerned, the Pharisees were at least partially correct in their response. That is, His mom was human; therefore, He was the Son of man with a portion of His nature as human as His mother. "Christ was made flesh and dwelt among us..." (Jn.1:14). His dual nature, human and divine, constituted Him as equidistant between man and God. This qualified Him as our redeemer and mediator. The Son of man part of Him allowed Him to be tempted, feel hunger and thirst, suffer pain, and feel the need of prayer. You and I can identify with all those human traits that Jesus possessed. But the answer given by the Pharisees, though true, was not the whole truth. Jesus proved this by asking them that if the Messiah was to have a human nature only, if He did not exist when David wrote, then how could David call Him Lord? "He (Jesus) said to them, 'How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls Him Lord?' For he says, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put you enemies under your feet' " (22:43-44). Is this cool stuff, or what? More tomorrow about who Christ is and what we ought to think about Him...

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

03/22/2017  
Irrefutably God's Son

"Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn.14:9) "Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory" (1 Tim.3:16).

As Jesus posed the question(s) What do you think about the Christ and Whose Son Is He, He was looking for big important stuff... Stuff like being the only begotten Son of God, born of a virgin and begotten by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Son of God, (1st scripture above), He was as divine as God, His Father. One of His names was Emmanuel which means "God with us." In His question, He was trying to elicit (the 2nd scripture above) that He was God manifest in the flesh. God acknowledged Him as His Son (Matt.3:16) and His disciples made that same acknowledgement.(Matt.14:33). By the way, even Satan copped to Jesus being God's Son (Matt.4:3) . The modernists of today might admit that Jesus was a good guy, but not that He was God's Son. If the modernist is to be taken seriously about the good guy thing, He couldn't have been a good guy, because good guys don't lie. So He was either the Son of God or a great deceiver. If the Pharisees were confused about who Jesus was, we must never fall into that same rut. Jesus' teachings testify of His divinity. He taught them and us as one having authority, and this authoritative teaching distinguished Him from man. He even spoke of the future as positively as if it were the 20/20 past...He was and is so far above man in the scope of His knowledge, as everything He taught was perfect and good. Those teachings were and are put to the test by non-believers. philosophers, statesman, Jews and even Christians and still stand today as the only teaching conceded to be without blemish... It no wonder that the officers who were sent to arrest Him said this; "Never has a man spoken as this man speaks" (Jn.7:46). Aren't we so happy that we serve Jesus, who is irrefutably God's Son...

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

03/23/2017  
Proof In The Pudding

"Do not believe Me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (Jn.10:37-38).

"The proof is in the pudding" may actually be a shortened version of the idiom, "the proof of the pudding is in its eating..." As God's Son in human form on earth, Jesus did things that proved He was indeed that pudding. He laid out the proof that He was the Son of God through His power. He laid down the principle that the merit of His works was inconsistent with any form of deception. His miracles were the evidence of the "pudding." When Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to Him one night, here's what he said; "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with Him" (Jn.3:2). Among other things, Jesus did these: He had power over the lifeless forces of nature, He quieted the tempest at sea, He walked on water, He turned water into wine, He had authority over diseases and physical disabilities, He raised Lazarus back to life after he had been dead for four (4) days... The miracles were all about the pudding.... "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. For these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name" (Jn.20:30-31). In my experience, it is one thing to say stuff and make claims. It is an altogether different thing to say stuff and make claims, and then back them up. As we continue to think about Jesus' question to the Pharisees in Matt.22:42; "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is He," Jesus lays out the truth for them and us. He did it through what He said, and backed it up by what He did. We serve an awesome Savior... The proof is in the pudding...

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

03/24/2017

Light... Understanding.... Wisdom...

"Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you" (Dan.5:14).

Let me set the scenario in which today's verse from the book of Daniel is found. The Babylonian king, Belshazzar, a few kings after Nebuchadnezzar, is in the midst of a wine drinking orgy with some 1,000 folks. He even has the temerity to have his underlings fetch some of the gold and silver vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem when he conquered and plundered it. The people at the party get to drink some more, but this time out of the Jewish goblets. Though it does not say so, I'll bet that some bragging by Belshazzar went along with the drinking. "Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing" (Vs. 5). You can all imagine the fear that was in the room. It says that the king grew pale, his hip joints went slack and his knees knocked. He sent for his wise men to interpret the writing, which they could not do, but the queen then entered the Palace and suggested that he send for Daniel. It would seem that she remembered that Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dreams a few years back... Even before Daniel interprets, today's verse is what Belshazzar has to say to Daniel. Daniel had a reputation...I have heard of you... Daniel was known as a godly man...the spirit of the gods is in you... What a compliment to Daniel... But here's the best; illumination (light), insight (understanding) and extraordinary wisdom have been found in him. Daniel is my hero! Because of his faithfulness in God, he embodies the wonderful virtues that even a pagan king can recognize. They are traits that we should all strive for. Jesus told us that we are to be the light of the world. Peter (2 Peter1:5) wrote that we are to add knowledge to our moral excellence. The book of Proverbs (3:13-15) says that a man who finds wisdom and gains understanding is blessed. The writer says it is more precious than gold and silver... What a wonderful testimony about Daniel. Through the Lord, he had virtues that all should strive for. Are we striving for them?

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

03/25/2017

The Lone Ranger Rides Again

Last week's quiz was about donkeys, so I couldn't resist asking some questions about horses.... So..... You must answer all the questions as there will be no neighs, and you can't whiney if you get one incorrect... As always, have fun....

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. What OT book contains a hymn celebrating drowned horses? (a) Exodus, (b) Isaiah, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Jeremiah.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who sang the hymn about the horse and its rider in the above question? (a) Isaiah, (b) Jeremiah, (c) Miriam, (d) Clydeous.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. What NT figure had a vision of locusts that looked like horses? (a) John the Baptist, (b) John, (c) Peter, (d) Paul.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What evil queen was executed by Jerusalem's Horse Gate? (a) Jezebel, (b) Athaliah, (c) Rubeous, (d) I made this one up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What OT leader was told to cripple the horses of his enemies? (a) Moses, (b) Ahab, (c) Joshua, (d) David.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What OT king had 12,000 horses? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hezekiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What 2 prophets were separated by horses of fire? (too easy for clues)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What queen had her blood spattered on King Jehu's horse? (ditto)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What king removed the horse idols that previous kings of Judah had dedicated to sun worship? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Jehoash, (c) Amaziah, (d) Josiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who ordered 70 horsemen to accompany Paul out of Jerusalem? (a) Festus, (b) Felix, (c) Claudius Lysias, (d) Agrippa.

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

03/27/2017

Is It I?

"As they were eating, He said, 'Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.' Being deeply grieved, they each began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord' " (Matt.26:21-22).

Most of us recognize the setting of today's verses, as Jesus and His disciples are celebrating their last Passover together. It is the meal we've come to know as The Last Supper. In verse 21, Jesus announces to the 12 disciples that one of them would betray Him. I can only imagine the effect this statement must have had... Surely they were filled with sorrow and consternation, as this was coming from the one they had followed for 3 years. They looked around, they responded with a question that echoes through the corridors of time to us today. It is a deeply personal question, as each of them began to take stock of themselves by asking, "Surely, not I Lord..." The KJV version renders the question, "Lord, is it I?" It would have been an easy thing for each to say, "It is not I; is it Peter? is it John? is it James?" It actually might be reinforcing the belief that each is to be saved or condemned on his own merits, and not those of others... Each will stand on his or her own record. The question that the disciples ask will be the topic for this weeks devotionals, as I think it teaches the constant need of self examination and evaluation. Concerning the Lord's Supper, Paul writes this; "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (I Cor.11:28). Christianity demands that we take inventory of our souls... There are so many aspects of our lives that we need to look at to see if we are walking in a worthy manner. Hopefully, we will challenge ourselves to live a life worthy of our calling, so this week we will be asking ourselves that all important question, "Lord, is it I?"

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

03/28/2017

### Is It I Who Have Been Blessed

"Lord, is it I?" (Matt.26:22) "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (Jas.1:17).

As we take inventory of our lives by asking the question, "Lord, is it I," lets start on a positive note and look at today's title... Sometimes its much easier to see the blessings of others. The pasture just across the fence may always look greener. Your neighbor's window at sunset looks golden, but if you could stand where he stands, you would see that your own window looks golden too... Today's verse from James lets us know that every good and perfect gift is from above. Even though we suffer an adversity from time to time, I would be willing to bet that our blessings far outweigh them. Every time Jane and I see and take care of our new grandson, we see the rich blessings that our God has bestowed upon us... Along with self-examination comes reflection. As we start to reflect on our Christian life we see that it begins with the blessings of His love and grace. Then, as we get into our Bibles, we see that through the Holy Spirit, God has given us the instruction manual of life. That same Holy Spirit that was implanted in us at our baptism is there to help us make the right decisions in life. As we look around us, we see our Christian brothers and sisters there to support us... As we saw 2 weeks ago, Jesus tells us this; "Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself..." We are to cast our worries on Him, as He gives us the example of His care over this planet and all of its life forms... I'll leave you today with the words of a song written by Johnson Oatman in 1897, "When Upon Life's Billows..."

"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one, And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.  
Count your blessings, name them one by one; count your blessings, see what God has done;  
Count your blessings, name them one by one; Count you many blessings, see what God has done."  
If we count our blessings, it will make us more thankful... Is it I who have been blessed?

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

03/29/2017

### Is It I Who Willingly Sin?

"Lord is it I?" (Matt.26:22). "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (I Jn.3:4).

There is obviously a dark side to the question that Jesus posed to His disciples when they celebrated their last Passover feast. Jesus had just told them that one of them with whom He had shared three years with would betray Him. Their question, Lord, is it I, was a response of guilt and disbelief that one of them would commit this horrible sin. And so, when it comes to an honest introspection on our part, what things are we guilty of that ought to make us ashamed? Today's verse from I John lets us know about sins that are considered to be lawlessness... I believe that he is talking about those things we know to be wrong that we do anyway. Is it I who does not let my speech reflect my beliefs? (Col.4:6) Is it I who does not take The Lord's Supper seriously enough? (I Cor.11:27) Is it I who holds vengeful thoughts in my mind? (Rom.12:19) Is it I who has grown weary of doing good things? (Gal.6:9). Is it I who has been selfish and self-centered? (Phil.2:4). I have left a lot out like drunkenness, gossip, envy and misplaced loyalty... I guess its easy for us to figure out where I going with this. Jesus had greater expectations of His disciples,

and it must have been painful to Him that Judas would be a betrayer. When we take the Lord into our lives, just as with His disciples, He has great expectations for us too. When it comes to committing the terrible sins I have listed, He wants us to be above the fray. He calls us to be pure and unblemished... It is only through God's grace that we can be penitent, and repent of those things we shouldn't do and come back to Him. It ought to be a goal to answer Him it I with a resounding no...

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

03/30/2017

### Is It I Who Doesn't Do The Good Stuff

"Lord, Is it I?" (Matt.26:22). "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin" (Jas.4:17).

Most people categorize what is mentioned in the above scripture from the epistle of James as a sin of omission... From the root word omit, these are about the times that we know the things we ought to do, but just don't do them. If I were to make a laundry list of these things, many of us might begin to feel just a bit guilty. Is it I who is negligent in my prayer life? (I Thess.5:17). Is it I who does not give as I have prospered? (I Cor.16:2). Is it I who is not adding knowledge to my faith? (II Pet.1:5). Is it I who fail to follow the Golden Rule? (Matt.7:12). Is it I who fails to teach the gospel to others? (Matt.28:19-20). Is it I who has hidden my light under a bushel? (Matt.5:14-16). Is it I who is guilty of neglecting the sick? (Matt.25:36-46). Is it I who has failed to be steadfast in my faith? (I Cor.15:58). Is it I who have failed to place the Lord's church above any other institution on earth? (Matt.6:33). Its quite a list to ponder over, isn't it... There is an old legend about a herd of mules that was attacked each night by a pack of wolves from a nearby forest. When the wolves attacked, the mules kicked violently in all directions. Consequently, the mules maimed and injured each other, while the wolves escaped unharmed. Finally, a wise old mule called the rest together for a conference and made known his plan. That night the wolves came yelping as usual, but instead of kicking wildly in all directions, they all ran and put their heads together in a circle and began kicking outward. The wolves were injured and took flight while the mules did no harm to one another. Christians must put their heads together and kick against the forces of evil. Instead of a guilty, Lord, is it I, our mantra ought to be this... Lord, it is I! I know I have sinned, but I don't want to... I want to do better. Because he hadn't attained his goals as yet, Paul said this; "I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me..... the one thing I do; Forgetting what is behind and straining for what is ahead.... And what's ahead? To win the prize for which God has called my heavenward..."(Phil.3:13-14). The fresh start we may be looking for is found only in Christ.

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

03/31/2017

Persian Lion Chow

"Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the widows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before" (Dan.6:10).



This is the verse that got Daniel his appointment in the lion's den. Power had passed from the Babylonians to the Persians and it pleased Darius, the king, to appoint 120 satraps to rule over the land. Daniel was one of them, and he was so good at his job that the king was about to make him the head honcho. The other satraps were jealous and envious of Daniel so they devised a trap for him. They conned the king to set up a month in which anyone who prayed to any other man or god but the king would be sentenced to sure death in the lion's den. Vanity will get you all the time, so the king reluctantly agreed. The satraps caught Daniel (today's verse) and the rest is our story of Persian Lion Chow... Kids learn about the miraculous intervention by God to save Daniel. Adults learn about the faithfulness of Daniel. Daniel was at least in his mid 70s at the time, so senior citizens see themselves in Daniel by his example of a mature faith that saves. Regardless of age, this is a timeless story of faith, friendship, justice, vengeance and God's sovereignty. Upon coming out of the den unscathed, Daniel said this to the king; "My God has sent His angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in His sight. Nor have I ever done wrong before you, O king" (6:22). Daniel was saved from the lions because of his faith and his actions...The text says that he was unharmed because he believed in God. Without the specter of being thrown to the lions, we are called upon to witness for the Lord each day, both by our faith and actions... I will challenge you to read and meditate on a few short verses today, Dan.6:25-28... We can see the effect that one man's faith had on a pagan king in this reading. What effect on those around us do you suppose we can have through our faith and actions. Lets all give it a try...

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