

01/01/2015
A Closer Encounter

"Come near to God and He will come near to you...." (Jas.4:8).

When I looked at the emails you sent me about the New Year, they revealed the idea of a closer relationship with the Lord. Today's verse is a good start point for everyone... Since 2014 is now a part of our past, it becomes a learning tool for making the New Year a better one. Since a close relationship with someone (including God) depends upon good communication, how did we do in that department last year, and is there room for improvement. Were we faithful enough in listening to Him through His Word? Another year has gone by... Did we read His Word enough? If we did not, can we honestly say we took our relationship with Him seriously enough? In the past year, were we steadfast enough in talking to the Lord in prayer? Any effective communication is a two-way street, therefore, serious Bible study must be accompanied by serious prayer. I guess the bottom line question here is about whether our degree of prayerfulness either increased or decreased this past year. To have a closer and more intimate relationship with the Lord, 2015 must be a year marked by a desire to understand His will for us. We can only come to know what He wants of us by listening.... Listening both through the Word and by talking with Him. This should be number one on our bucket list of improvements. A "Close Encounter" of the good kind...

Have a great New Year's Day... Come near to God and He will come near to you... Love mark
Phil.4:11

01/02/2015
How About Each Other

"Now about brotherly love we do not need to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more" (1 Thess.4:9-10).

As we look again into the rear view mirror that was 2014, how did we do with our relationships with our brethren? Did we reach the bench mark set by members of the church in Thessalonica in today's verses? I hope that our love for our brethren improved as the year went by... Did it? And if it was pretty good, are we ready to make improvements? Have you had some of your brothers and sisters into your home this past year, and have you been in theirs? "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Pet.4:9). If there are some new folks that have come into your church, have you taken the time and effort not just to welcome them, but to get to know them? Have we spent some time to email, write, text or call any of our brothers and sisters during the year? Perhaps it would be a good idea to have our church directory near our

Bibles. "Peace to you. The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name" (3 Jn.14). We could then make contact with those of our brethren we have missed. The better we get to know and love our brothers and sisters, the more we will be able to understand how to serve them. We notice in today's verses, that even after the apostle Paul compliments the members at Thessalonica, he says this: "We urge you, brothers, to do so more and more." Lets resolve to make 2015 the year that we really get closer to our brethren in brotherly love...

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

01/03/2015
Just A Few Questions

Just a few questions to test your bible knowledge... Enjoy, and have fun...

- _____ 1. A Christian who returns to a life of sin is compared to what animals? (a) dog and sow, (b) cat and dog, (c) vulture and buzzard.
- _____ 2. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were put in a furnace _____ times hotter than normal. (a) 4, (b) 5, (c) 6, (d) 7.
- _____ 3. Jacob bowed _____ times as he approached Esau. (a) 4, (b) 5, (c) 6, (d) 7.
- _____ 4. Who were the believers that "discipled" Apollos? (a) Paul and Silas, (b) John Mark and Barnabas, (c) Priscilla and Aquila.
- _____ 5. Mordecai raised his cousin named: (a) Haman, (b) Vashti, (c) Vinny, (d) Esther.
- _____ 6. In the Book of Revelation, what's the name of the tree standing on both sides of the river of the water of life? (a) tree of life, (b) tree of death, (c) tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
- _____ 7. What Biblical man's hand got leprosy by sticking it into his cloak? (a) Aaron, (b) Moses, (c) Elijah, (d) all of these.
- _____ 8. In the garden when arrested, Jesus said that God could send more than _____ legions of angels. (a) 10, (b) 12, (c) 1,000, (d) a million.
- _____ 9. What was the occupation of Jairus? (a) shepherd, (b) centurion, (c) seamstress. (d) ruler of the synagogue.

_____ 10. What was the first command that God made to Adam and Eve? (a) stay naked, (b) be careful what you eat, (c) be fruitful and multiply, (d) stay in the garden.

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

01/05/2015
Getting To Know Others

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt.6:13-16).

My last simple resolution for making 2015 better than 2014 is about our relationship with the world. Today's verses that refer to people of God as salt and light, make it abundantly clear that Jesus wants us to develop meaningful relationships with people in the world. He wants folks out there to see His light shown in our lives, so that His gospel can be communicated to them...In 2015, lets become the neighbors that Jesus refers to in the Parable of the Good Samaritan... You know... The one who is actually willing to help even those they don't know very well. If you are involved in a group Bible study, why not invite a co-worker or neighbor to attend. If the glory of Jesus is not reflected to others by our words and works, what kind of "love your neighbor as yourself" are we? The apostle Paul said this: "Therefore, as we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal.6:10). He did say all people, didn't he? Finally, as we put 2014 in perspective one last time and look ahead, lets consider Paul's take on his own life... "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). Lets make 2015 the greatest year ever... Lets get closer to God, our brothers and sisters, and our neighbors...

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

01/06/2015
Promises, Promises

"Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness" (Gen.15:6).

The long, long shadow of Jesus stretched back in time to the sin of Adam and Eve, the call of Abraham, and the Law of Moses. It was of great importance during the transition of God's favoritism for Israel, all the way to the universal salvation of all mankind in the kingdom of God...

The first Christians were Jews, but it soon became obvious that Christians were much more than just a new sect of Judaism. Without adopting Jewish customs and rituals, Gentiles became

Christians.. Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles as they traversed the southern part of Galatia. Paul defended the truths of what he preached by drawing on the Genesis account to demonstrate that God, through Abraham, had foreshadowed the gospel of Christ. Abraham had no way to understand that God would bring all of this about, since he was a patriarch without any kids, but just look at today's verse... Abram (Abraham) believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.... People are to be saved today, like faithful Abraham many years ago, because of their faith. Praise be to the Lord that God's promise to Abraham was fulfilled when Jesus died for the sins of mankind... Why? Its so simple... Because God promised... God always keeps His promises....

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

01/07/2015
Not Serendipity

"He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in the last times for your sake" (1 Pet.1:20).

I once heard someone describe serendipity as the "art of happy accidents..." The word was coined by Horace Walpole in 1754. In a letter to a friend, he explained about a unexpected discovery he had made by reference to a Persian fairy tale, The Three Princes of Serendip. The word has come to describe the ability to make fortunate discoveries by accident.. The apostle Peter is making a declaration in today's verses. In fact, it would do us good to read and meditate on 1 Pet.1:18-21 to put it all in context. The declaration is that God foreordained redemption from sin before the creation of the world... God, in His infinite wisdom, had purposed to save mankind from the very beginning. The sending of Jesus was not an afterthought... It wasn't a serendipitous event... Christians often associate salvation and redemption with the return of Jesus and our judgement in the age to come. They tend to forget the meaning of the terms for this life! Peter didn't tell his readers that they would be redeemed in the future, but that they had already been redeemed for the present. Christians are already saved, and have been bought by the blood of the Lamb... By His grace, God saved and redeemed people. It is our task to live in such a way as to reflect the holy people God has made us to be. After all, this didn't happen by accident... God planned it all...

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

01/08/2015
The Real Purpose

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have a sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Pet.1:22).

Since God's plan for us was not something of happenstance, but out of a plan, lets take a closer look at what His plan really entailed. I think that God's purpose has been to fashion a people (us) to wear His name, to be redeemed from sin, and to reflect His holiness. Through the apostle Peter in today's verse, we see that He has decreed that we purify ourselves by obeying the truth... Salvation involves believing the truth, but the truth also has to be obeyed or it is reduced to just a bunch of words. The truth then becomes two things... A confession and a way of life. I believe it is clear that Peter wanted his readers to know that the way of life they had begun in Christ was a radical move... It actually meant being reborn. Faith and truth are much more than abstractions to be embraced. When a person acts on their faith, repents, and is baptized into Christ, that person is spiritually born again. If we tie Peter's words in with Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in Jn.3:5, the unmistakable association between baptism and rebirth is revealed. Not serendipity... Not fate... Not dumb luck... It is all wrapped up in a plan and purpose that is revealed by God to us in His Word...

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

01/09/2015
From Malachi To Matthew

"And we have heard the words of the prophets made certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet.1:19).

The Old Testament Book of Malachi was written a little over 400 years before the birth of Jesus, so you're probably wondering where I'm going with today's title. When Christians make the transition from Malachi (the Old Testament) to Matthew (the New), they follow a transition of the Old Testament story. There is no radical break in the seam between the two. It is the same God that is speaking... Holiness and righteousness are expected... In Christ, however, promises are fulfilled, mysteries uncovered, and shadows become realities. When we use the term that the Old Testament "foreshadowed" the New, it means just that. Jesus was the reality and the words of the Old Testament were the shadow. No new understanding of God appeared when Jesus

declared His kingdom, but this must be understood... When Jesus came, something radically new made its appearance... The discontinuities between the Old Testament and the New should not drown out those continuities, but the reverse should not occur either. Jesus fulfilled prophecy that was embedded in words about the direct predictions of Him made in the Old Testament. He revealed Himself in those foreshadowing's of Old Testament figures. At the same time, Jesus did something that couldn't be done in the Old Testament... He redeemed all mankind and brought hope to a hopeless landscape. We now discover the provision God has made for a reconciliation between Himself and the human family..In the shadow of the Old Testament is the unfolding of God's purpose... "until the day dawns, the morning star rises in your hearts..."

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

01/10/2015
Some Fun Questions

I hope you enjoy these questions from both the Old and T New Testament.. Have fun...

- _____ 1. What Bible figure was called "mighty in the scriptures?" (a) Apollos, (b) Silas, (c) Barnabas, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 2. The Year of Jubilee came every _____ years for the Israelites. (a) 5, (b) 10, (c) 20, (d) 50.
- _____ 3. The 12 gates of the holy city will be made of _____. (a) silver, (b) pearls, (c) platinum, (d) gold.
- _____ 4. Gideon squeezed how many bowl(s) of water out of his fleece? (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) 50.
- _____ 5. Who suggested that it is not wise to spend too much time at your neighbor's house? (a) Paul, (b) David, (c) Solomon.
- _____ 6. What Bible figure said, "in a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian?" (a) King Agrippa, (b) Festus, (c) Felix, (d) all of these.
- _____ 7. What two things did David take from Saul while he was asleep? (a) shield and helmet, (b) sandals and knife, (c) spear and water jug.
- _____ 8. What king took all the gold out of Solomon's temple? (a) Darius, (b) Artaxerses, (c) Nebuchadnezzar, (d) Midas.

_____ 9. Where did Job live? (a) Puz, (b) Buz, (c) Uz, (d) Luz, (e) Zuz.

_____ 10. What was the name of Elisha's servant? (a) Eliphaz, (b) Gehazi, (c) Bildad, (d) Zophar.

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

01/12/2015
The Compass

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet.1:21).

Before the wonder of the GPS, the compass was used to determine direction... When I began my days of bay clamming, I got hopelessly lost in the thick fog several times. I bought a compass so that I could have some semblance of direction on those occasions, and I still have one with me at all times in my boat... A compass requires an outside force to function, and a moral compass without God is merely a meaningless, whirling mechanism. Without any authoritative revelation from God, the darkness of immorality is inevitable. If God has not spoken in matters of religion, hence behavior, humans are left to their own devices. They decide for themselves who or what their god or gods will be. We all know how that works, as one opinion is as good as another, and there is no umpire or referee. A moral compass is impossible without a religious one. Over a time frame of some 1,500 years, God endowed a few of His servants with His Spirit, and caused them to put into writing, a record of Himself and His ways... The result is the Old and New Testaments, showing us that the reality of God is certain. The fog of despair, sin and temptation can no longer keep us in a stranglehold. God has spoken and continues to speak through His Word. It is the external force that allows our compass to keep us on track. With that force, the apostle Paul gave testimony... "I believed; therefore I have spoken..." (2 Cor.4:13). With that force, we can give testimony also...

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

01/13/2015
Our Great High Priest

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess" (Heb.4:14).

In the Book of Hebrews, the author returns again and again to the theme of Jesus as our great High priest... "For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people" (Heb.2:17). Before the writer is finished, he will turn Gen.14:18-20 and Psa.110:4 into persuasive arguments that the priesthood of Jesus was a foreshadowing of Melchizedek and more precisely the high priesthood of Aaron. Both the prophets and priests of the Old Testament stood between God and the people. The priest's service was an upward one, as they took the offerings of the people and presented them to God in a way prescribed in the Law. The work and ideals of the prophets and priests, each in its own way, foreshadowed the work of the Son of God... On the Day of Atonement, the Aaronic high priest passed from the sight of the people into the Most Holy Place... Jesus passed from the sight of the watching disciples ("who has gone through the heavens") ascending through the heavens into the heavenly sanctuary, as His work of atonement was accomplished... Today's verse explains to us that "since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..... let us hold firmly to the faith we profess..." He has sacrificed for us... He has shown us God's grace... He leads us to the Father... He mediates for us... He is our great High Priest. We'll take a closer look at the superiority of His priesthood tomorrow...

Have a great day.... ASAP Always Say A Prayer... Love mark Phil.4:111

01/14/2015

Why He's A Better High Priest

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are ---- yet was without sin" (Heb.4:15).

Jesus as our High Priest is superior to the one of Aaron and his descendants in several ways. As we can readily see in today's verse, when Christians come to God through Him in prayer, they can be assured that He understands their weaknesses. Jesus was also tempted in every way and came through it cleaner than the wind driven snow... Also, when Christians pray, it is not to a God who stands aloof in some faraway place, but one who is acquainted with the griminess of life. In Job 10:4-5, Job chides God about not being mortal, thinking that God could not appreciate what he suffered. Jesus surely put that to rest! "When Jesus came as High Priest of the good things that are already here, He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation" (Heb.9:11). Jesus serves us as High Priest in the courts of heaven itself... No human could ever do that. Lastly, and of the greatest importance is this... Jesus has offered his own flesh as a sacrifice. Unlike the priests of the Old Covenant, He gave Himself as a ransom and payment for our sins... A

traditional hymn come to mind... "What a mighty God we serve, What a mighty God we serve,
Angels bow before Him, Heaven and earth adore Him; What a mighty God we serve..."

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

01/15/2015

Zion - The New Jerusalem

"But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, you have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven" (Heb.12:22-23).

More than likely, the author of the Book of Hebrews is referring to his reader's conversions when he said that they have "come to Mount Zion..." Zion first appears in the Bible as a Jebusite fortification, with valleys to the east, west and south providing a natural protection. King David captured the city by entering through a water shaft and it then belonged to Israel. As things evolved, it came to stand for Jerusalem in its entirety. Just looking at it, Jerusalem or Zion appeared to be a regular city, like any other, but because of its spiritual importance, the place would foreshadow heavenly realities... "But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother" (Gal.4:26). Zion in the New Testament becomes synonymous with the Jerusalem above and Christian fellowship, an extension of heavenly realms. "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 Jn.1:3). To belong to Christ is to share in the church of the firstborn, and to have one's name registered in heaven as we see in today's verses... In Zion, the New Jerusalem where Christians have their fellowship, the Son of God is the mediator for us. Praise God, that through Jesus offering Himself as a sacrifice for us, He is able to represent men and women with all their weaknesses and to plead their case before God in Zion, the New Jerusalem...

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

01/16/2015

An Unassisted Triple Play

"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; they will condemn Him to death" (Matt.20:18).

A triple play occurs in baseball when all three outs happen on one play. The unassisted triple play happens when one player makes all three of the putouts. It is so rare, that only 15 of them

have been turned in the history of Major League Baseball. If you like to google stuff, try Bill Wambsganss... A belief in Jesus is to be involved in an unassisted triple play, performed by Jesus Himself. First, Christians believe in a past event. Over 2,000 years ago, a man appeared in real time who was God manifested in the flesh. Just as surely as there was a John F.

Kennedy and Julius Caesar, there was a Jesus. Second, Christians have a real and vital relationship with Jesus in the present and believe that He lives now, and sits at the right hand of God. Its not so much the Jesus that walked the streets of Galilee that we turn to, but the Man who rules over human affairs and makes intercession for us. Third, a Christian faith is about a hope for the future. We are in the last days, and the world is moving toward a purposeful end.

Jesus will return in our future and judgement and eternity are before us... The Galilean who lived 2,000 years ago, the one who is presently at God's right hand, and the one who is coming again are all the same. To be a Christian is to have the past event, the living presence and future hope all woven together. The most spectacular unassisted triple play of all time....

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

01/17/2015
Some Cool Questions

I hope you enjoy the challenge of these questions... Have fun...

- _____ 1. In what book of the Bible do we find the story of the sun standing still? (a) Joshua, (b) Judges, (c) Ruth, (d) Isaiah.
- _____ 2. Which men wanted to kill Lazarus? (a) Lawyers, (b) Maccabees, (c) Chief Priests.
- _____ 3. What color was the manna? (a) Yellowish, (b) Reddish, (c) Brownish, (d) White.
- _____ 4. What 2 items that touched Paul were then used to heal people? (a) Handkerchiefs/aprons, (b) robe/tunic, (c) shirt/tie, (d) babushka/yarmulke.
- _____ 5. In the promised Land there were _____ cities of rescue. (a) 2, (b) 4, (c) 6, (d) 8, (e) 10.
- _____ 6. Which book of the Bible says "Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body?" (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Acts.
- _____ 7. Ruth and Boaz had a son named _____. (a) Obed, (b) Ovid, (c) Omer, (d) Onan.

_____ 8. The words "he who wins souls is wise," is found in what book of the Bible? (a) Philippians, (b) Ephesians, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Proverbs.

_____ 9. Zacchaeus repaid those he had cheated, how many times the amount? (a) 2, (b) 4, (c) 6, (d) unlimited.

_____ 10. What New Testament book was written to Gaius? (a) Acts, (b) 3 John, (c) 1 Peter, (d) Philemon.

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

01/19/2015
The Art Of Discovery

"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven" (Matt.16:17).

Jesus uttered these words to Peter when he answered the question correctly. The question asked of the disciples was; "Who do you say I am?" (V. 15). The correct answer was; "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (V. 16). Do we grow weary of all these questions and answers? We do not because they are an important part of the learning process. In the teacher student relationship, its always about the art of discovery. A good teacher is always trying to get his or her students to discover what he or she wants them to discover. Somehow, Peter made the discovery... "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God...." Its what Jesus wanted Peter and the disciples to discover. Its what Jesus wants everyone to discover. Salvation begins with this confession of faith. The confession of faith that Peter made was so important that Jesus would throw out some more stuff He wanted them to discover... "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it..." And there's more! "And I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Vs. 18-19). The keys that Peter and the disciples were to be given would turn the lock that had barred humans from heaven. It gets unlocked for us when we make the discovery...
More about the keys tomorrow...

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

01/20/2015
The Important Keys

"He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure" (Isa.33:6).

Have you ever left your home and shut the door only to realize that your keys were sitting on the kitchen table? I don't know about you, but I'm getting a bit old to be crawling through windows anymore... Keys allow us to gain entry into things that are of enough value to us to be locked. In today's passage, the Messianic prophet Isaiah talks about a key. I believe the treasure he is speaking about in terms of a foundation is Jesus, and he lets his listeners know that a rich store of salvation, wisdom and knowledge are available. The fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure..As we fast forward about 700 years the words of Jesus resound in our ears. In response to Jesus' question, "who do you think I am?" (Matt16:15), Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God..." (V 16) Jesus lets the disciples know that something great awaits them and gives them the keys... "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven..." (V 19). The message that Peter would soon proclaim would unlock the door that had barred people from God... Peter, along with the other apostles, was given the keys. Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit would endow Peter and the others, to speak with the authority about God... The kingdom that was opened to all was Jesus' church and their salvation... Through their inspired words of truth, the apostles now had the keys to invite people into that church. Because we have God's inspired words at our disposal, we hold those keys in our hands also, and can share the good news with others. Lets make sure that we hold those precious keys very close to us...

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

01/21/2015
The Great Sustainer

"Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

After Peter made use of the "keys to the kingdom" on that historic first Pentecost after the resurrection, about 3,000 people embraced the good news, repented and were baptized into Christ in response to today's verse. The apostles quickly learned that there was more to do than just baptizing the lost. The new converts had to grow into their faith. They would have to form communities of faith (the church?) in order to sustain their faith through lifting one another up. The apostles also learned that in order for this group to become an effective force in the world there was much to do. Praise the Lord that He did not leave them (and us) out on a desert

island without any visible resources. Here are Jesus' words: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you..." (Jn.14:26). Through the Holy Spirit, Christ guided and sustained believers by means of the apostles' teachings. Jesus empowered His people to do what He commanded by means of the Holy Spirit which had been given to them when they were baptized into Christ... "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Jesus is not only our Savior, but our great sustainer also... Lets look tomorrow how that great sustenance continues today...

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

01/22/2015
Sustaining Today

"They devoted themselves to the apostle's teachings and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer...All the believers were together and had everything in common..... Everyday they continued to meet in the temple courts..." (Acts 2:42; 44; 46).

To those who believed, repented and were baptized in response to the apostle Peter's message on that Pentecost Day, a crucial element in the Holy Spirit's work was the word spoken by the apostles and teachers. The apostle Paul later wrote this: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God" (Eph.6:17). We have that Word available to us today... Through the spoken word, Christians grew to understand what they were to believe and how they were to behave. The sustaining work of Christ also entailed the worship and fellowship of the believers, as we see in today's verses. The worship of the early church included observing the Lord's Supper and prayers... The Lord works through the "breaking of bread" just as He does through baptism. In baptism, He takes away sins, and in the Lord's Supper He builds up and empowers the saved. "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor.10:16). So by means of prayer, the Word, the Lord's Supper, the indwelling Spirit, and through the fellowship of a community (church) who share spiritual and material needs, Christ sustains and builds up His people. That's us. Lets use all the tools given to sustain us to be the best Christians we can be...

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

01/23/2015
Jesus - The CEO

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way" (Eph.1:22-23).

For any corporation to be successful, everyone from top to bottom must function and do their parts. Generally, the people at the top supply the ideas and instructions, and the employees carry them out. When the apostle Paul used the metaphor as Christ as the head of His church, leadership was the subject. For a community of people to pursue purposeful goals and do worthwhile things, good leadership is crucial... Just as the head of one's body is the nerve center from which the body functions as a unit, Christ is the head of the church. His leadership gives unity to Christians, and it has spread over time and space. Christ is the authority from which the doctrine, worship, hope, and behavior of the church flow... Because Jesus is not physically present today, we come to rely on the inspired words found in the Bible, and it is here that He exercises His headship... The church knows how He is to be praised and the type of lives they are to live because He has spoken through His Word. Having leadership implies authority, but that isn't all. More about Jesus being the CEO next time...

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

01/24/2015
Some Fun Questions

I hope you enjoy testing your Bible recall this morning.... Have fun...

- _____ 1. What Bible book contains the words, "For the love of money is the root of all evil?"
(a) Galatians, (b) Ephesians, (c) Philippians, (d) 1 Timothy
- _____ 2. The poles used to carry the Ark of the Covenant were made of _____
wood. (a) Gopher, (b) Acacia, (shittim) (c) Sycamore, (d) Oak.
- _____ 3. We know the New Testament character Didymus as _____. (a) Thomas, (b)
Peter, (c) Zacchaeus, (d) Judas.
- _____ 4. Does the Bible say that husbands should submit to their wives? (a) Yes, (b) No, (c)
Perhaps.
- _____ 5. What Old Testament prophet said the Jews put their wages into purses with holes in
them? (a) Amos, (b) Obadiah, (c) Haggai, (d) Zechariah.
- _____ 6. At what time did Eutychus go to sleep and fall out the window? (a) 9, (b) 10, (c) 11,
(d) 12.

_____ 7. What Bible book contains the words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?" (a) Matthew, (b) Mark, (c) Luke, (d) John, (e) Acts.

_____ 8. Who replaced Judas as the twelfth apostle? (a) Thomas, (b) Matthias, (c) Bartholomew, (d) Barsabbas.

_____ 9. Which of these does not destroy earthly treasures? (a) Rust, (b) Thieves, (c) Moths, (d) Termites.

_____ 10. "Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" is in what book of the Bible?(a) Galatians, (b) 1 Samuel, (c) Ephesians, (d) 2 Kings.

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

01/26/2015

What The Boss Does

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way" (Eph.1:22-23).

If today's verses look familiar, they are the ones I used on Friday. It is clear that God intended for Jesus to be the head of the church. He's the president, CEO, boss and head honcho all wrapped up into one. All of these descriptions imply authority, which Jesus Himself spoke about... "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me... (Matt.28:18). I think there's even more than just that authority though. Here is one implication we should look at closely. The head of a business, corporation or government entity ought to seek the best interest of those who look to him or her for leadership. Workers who are content with their leaders tend to be much more productive, and isn't that what the boss is looking for? Christ is the wellspring of the church.. He is the source for which its ideals and purposes find their expression. "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor.15:20). Because He is the firstfruit of those to be raised from the dead, He is the Christian's hope... He did not become head of the church by accident. He earned the headship by modeling the life He wants people to live. He took the final step by giving His life that we might be saved... That's what our boss did, and we have our hope because of it...

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

01/27/2015

Those Pesky Similes And Metaphors

"I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep.... I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved..." (Jn.10:7 & 9)

Fortunately, the Bible, especially the New Testament, is not a bland piece of uninteresting prose. As is common to speech everywhere, whatever the language or the time, the uses of figurative expressions are interspersed throughout... The use of similes ("the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed") (Matt. 13:31) and metaphors ("I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener") (Jn.15:1) are common figurative expressions. The use of metaphors and similes could cause a bit of a problem as they call for the reader to interpret just what they mean, but on the whole, they make the inspired Word of God much more interesting. The ability of the figures of speech to make the narrative more colorful and powerful is certainly worth the risk. The apostle Paul was masterful at using these metaphors, so seeing runners and boxers showing me how to live my life is really cool... Jesus was certainly good at it too... He could have easily said, "I am the source from which My disciples learn how to good deeds." Instead, He chose to say: "I am the the vine, and you are the branches" (Jn.15:5). He goes on in the fifteenth chapter of John to describe the relationship in metaphoric terms... With these wonderful expressions, we can have the figures of speech make the words come alive to stir our mind and memories. Readers will make associations in the process and draw conclusions. In doing this, the Bible becomes a master teacher. It tells more than just what to think, but rather it stirs us to think. Paul, like many of the biblical authors, used metaphors to stir thoughts and emotions. Some of his most memorable figures of speech are used to describe the church. We'll take a look at these over the next few days...

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

01/28/2015

The Church As The Body

"Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom.12:4-5).

Sometimes the use of a metaphor requires no explanation, as the association may be self-evident. It is obvious that the church is not a literal body, but in very significant ways it does function like a literal body. The first thing to look at is that a literal body is made up of many parts

which can function singularly, but work the best when they coordinate with other parts. It is very obvious what an arm, leg or an eye do to help the body to function well, but not as obvious for others. While arms and legs are moving about doing their intended work, our internal organs like the stomach, liver, pancreas and kidneys are doing their thing without being seen, and there's no conscious effort by the arms and legs to help... In much the same way, the church has many members as the parts that depend on one another. Simply put, no one is effective working alone... Second, a literal body is one complete entity. It has many parts, but it is also a single whole... The apostle Paul is making the point that each member of the church, like each part of a body, contributes to the well-being of the church. Each member or part takes satisfaction in knowing that it is helping to keep the body healthy, and when its going well, none seek its own independent glory. In order for the church to be a true body, all of its parts must work in coordination with one another. Oh.... I left out one very important thing. A body needs a head, a brain that assigns tasks to both the visible and hidden parts. Christ is the head of the church and defines how it worships, works and its manner of life... The church as a body is a great metaphor, and its Head never fails...

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

01/29/2015
A Great Building

"By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that is already laid which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor.3:11-12).

With today's metaphor regarding the church, the apostle Paul drew on something from everyday life. He drew on a thing that was readily understood, so his readers could appreciate God's design and purpose for them as they lived within a group of believers. As we look at today's huge buildings, it may be even more applicable now than when it was written... Paul is with his compatriot Apollos when he speaks of themselves as builders. Notice in today's verses, I laid a foundation as an expert builder... After the foundation is laid the building materials are chosen and the actual building of the structure takes place. They probably do some calculations so that the weight bearing supports will be able to hold the structure as they design the rooms. I've never built a house, but I understand that each step in the process is essential for it to be what it is supposed to be. One thing is so important, that Paul goes back to it. Unless the foundation is right, no matter how meticulously they build, it will not work! Paul makes this important point... "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that is already laid which is Christ Jesus." The church is indeed a building, and not the one that many think of that has doors, pews and a pulpit... It is a spiritual building that is built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. The church will never be right unless it is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and the teachings of His apostles with the distinct understanding that "Christ Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone"

(Eph.2:20). The church ought to be a great building because of its strong and everlasting foundation...

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

01/30/2015
Its About Family

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (Eph.3;14-15).

Yesterday we looked at the church as a building with a strong foundation as a metaphor for the church. But like every comparison, at some point the likenesses may break down. One example of this is that a building is something that is static. It may show a solid nature, but once constructed, it does not move. The church is a living and breathing thing, as an organism made up of people who are probably diverse in nature, Every person has various personal needs and idiosyncrasies... Each person can be appreciated for his or her particular and individual worth.

When we factor in the considerations we have for individual members, the church becomes more and more like a family... Though it is not like a family in every aspect, the similarities are great enough for us to use this metaphor to describe it.. No Christian has to be perfect in every way to gain acceptance within the church family.. Maybe what clinches the metaphor the best for me is this: The church, like a family, is a place of love, mutual respect, appreciation and support.. I leave you with the words of this powerful song... "We're part of the family that's been born again; Part of the family whose love knows no end; For Jesus has saved us, and made us His own, Now we're part of the family that's on its way home..." (Lanny Wolfe 1974).

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

01/31/2015
Some Fun Bible Questions

I hope you enjoy straining your brain a bit to answer these questions from the Bible... Have fun...

_____ 1. According to the Book of Proverbs, "the tongue of the wise brings _____" (a) healing, (b) peace, (c) love, (d) all of these.

_____ 2. According to the Book of Proverbs, when is not a good time to "loudly bless your neighbor?" (a) after lunch, (b) before dinner, (c) early in the morning, (d) late at night.

- _____ 3. In Daniel's second vision, how many horns did the goat have? (a) 1, (b) 2, (c) 3, (d) 4.
- _____ 4. What was Moses' father's name? (a) Jesse, (b) Haran, (c) Amram, (d) Nahor.
- _____ 5. Who said, "But godliness with contentment is great gain?" (a) Peter, (b) Paul, (c) John, (d) Solomon.
- _____ 6. In what book of the Bible are we told "to cast our bread upon the water?" (a) Psalms, (b) Proverbs, (c) Ecclesiastes, (d) Philipians.
- _____ 7. What was the name of the boy who was left under a bush to die? (a) Moses, (b) Isaac, (c) John, (d) Ishmael.
- _____ 8. To be on the church's widow list, how old did a widow need to be? (a) 50, (b) 55, (c) 60, (d) 70.
- _____ 9. What was on each of the 4 corners of the bronze altar of the tabernacle? (a) a cherub, (b) a ram, (c) an ephod, (d) a horn.
- _____ 10. The Book of 1 Chronicles spends most of its pages discussing what Bible character? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Clydeous.

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