

10/02/2017  
Pride That Leads To Problems

"According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that are mere flea bites in comparison..... Pride leads to very other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind."

From Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

Disagreements over what the Bible teaches have plagued those who want to follow Jesus' teaching that His followers "all be one" from Jn.17:20-21... He prayed that we all be one, just as He and the Father were one. That is why a biblical matter where there is broad agreement stretching across time, deserves more than just passing attention. Peter's powerful words regarding submission bring up a rare area of agreement among those who claim Christ as the Lord. Spanning a great gulf of time and space, great minds like C. S. Lewis have agreed that the most fundamental of human sins is pride.. Pride is a sin that spawns arrogance and refuses submission. In the garden of Eden, Eve saw a fruit that she surmised was good to eat, even though she had plenty of good stuff to eat already. Though that particular fruit was forbidden by God to eat, there was that looming temptation of wanting to be like God. In my quote from C. S. Lewis, he looks at "pride" as the ultimate evil, as he calls it "the complete anti-state of mind".... This section of 1st Peter deals with submission, and it seem from reading it that Peter had his hands full when he urged Christians to submit. I think that pride submits only out of necessity, and then reluctantly... Pride is the antithesis of submission. Peter, in his own spirit inspired way, boldly takes on the self-willed arrogance that has plagued humans from the beginning of time. For the next few days, we will look at pride and its intimate relationship to submission. In the countless cases where right and wrong are not at issue, for the sake of peace and order, Peter says that Christians ought to swallow their pride and be willingly submissive. There are some tough lessons to be learned here...

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

10/03/2017  
Submission Part One

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors , who are sent to punish those who do wrong and commend those who do right" (1 Pet.2:13-14).

There is a long-standing struggle about how God's people are to balance their allegiance to God, with the demand that they are to be submissive to secular rulers. If you think this is a

recent phenomena, way back in the days of Samuel the prophet in the Old Testament it was there. Samuel was as just and honest man who ever walked the earth, but his two sons who he had appointed to rule and judge were not. Israel reeled under their mismanagement, as they abused their power, but dishonesty and immorality were only the tip of the iceberg. The nation faced annihilation at the hands of the Philistines, and in desperation, the people asked Samuel to appoint a king. After he warned them of its dangers and consequences, he reluctantly helped them secure a king. In Peter's time, the people were under the rule of the Roman Empire. It was ruthless system that kept its subjects in line with overbearing force, yet Peter told the people to submit for the Lord's sake to the authority of governments... Fast forward to today and we find that Christians have a stake in good government...The Psalmist asked this question; "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (11:3). Christians have nothing to gain from chaos and disorder. Normally, it is in the self-interest of those in power to punish the evil-doers, and to praise hard-working, honest folks. I think that Peter had his Spirit inspired eyes are on the influence Christians have on the unbelieving world about them. I believe when he wrote, "show proper respect to everyone," (Vs 17) it was to have an umbrella effect. If we read the entire verse it says this; "Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king" In a wonderful nutshell we have the mantra of a good Christian. We are to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord, fear God, and honor the king. The fear God sandwiched between the other two demonstrates that Peter is telling us that allegiance to God is one step above allegiance to any other entity.... I hope you find these words as powerful as I do..

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

10/04/2017

Submission To Masters

"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God" (1 Pet.2:18-19).

Slavery was an ingrained institution in the days of the apostle Peter. I find it interesting to note, since I am sure that all of us find the institution deplorable, that the New Testament writers do attack the practice itself. With the institution so firmly entrenched, I think that Peter thinks it would be a waste of time to try to bring it down in one foul swoop... First of all, I think that Peter is addressing Christian slaves who were what we would call "domestics." The Greek word *oiketai* backs that up. These were slaves that fit into family structures, not those who spent a life of misery working countless hours in mines or fields. Under normal conditions, domestic slaves served the Lord best without grumbling when they went about their tasks with reasonable grace... I would certainly imagine that submission could be particularly chafing when those over them were arrogant and demanding. Even under these circumstances, Peter urges them to be

courteous, even when the masters were not and showed them little respect... Cheerful obedience allows one to set their own agenda and perhaps even become the master of the situation. Peter was concerned about giving his readers spiritual resources to deal with being owned and with being regarded as living machines at their master's disposal. I do believe that the New Testament contains principles that eventually uprooted slavery, as we look at Philemon 16. I also feel that its not too much of a stretch for the principles being expressed here to apply today's workplace. The person in charge may not always be kind. If the Christian cannot control the conditions under which he or she works, they can always be in charge of themselves...We cannot allow unreasonable demands or nagging complaints to lead to bitterness, remembering that we are the Christians. Doing one's best, working diligently, and maintaining a cheerful demeanor not only honors God but gives one dignity and peace.... It is an interesting subject to explore, and if you find more in the Bible about it, be sure to share it with me....

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

10/05/2017  
Submission To Christ

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth' " (1 Pet.2:21-22).

As a sort of dovetail to Peter's teachings about submission to masters, he prods us with today's two verses. If submission to the master should prove difficult, one should consider the example of Christ. Under worse conditions than anyone could ever imagine, He committed Himself to God. Christ had set the example for anyone who would make a commitment to Him. All believers must follow His steps. Within the context, Peter's words about submission transcend all stations of life. The example of Christ is fitting for every Christian to follow. To cement his thoughts, Peter turns to the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, one of the most prolific Messianic Old Testament chapters. Not only does the chapter tell of the future Savior in vivid terms, but today's quote gives some insight into his sinless character.... "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." Christ never answered insult with insult or threat with threat, and deceit was foreign to Him. He could have, but He committed Himself to the righteous Judge. When as Christians we submit ourselves to Christ, submission in earthly terms becomes much less demeaning... I find it wonderful that Peter addresses one of the most cherished doctrines of the Christian faith, vicarious atonement. To do something vicariously is to do it through the experiences of others. Through Christ, punishment for sin has been measured out by God. We have but to turn back to Isaiah 53 to get the final thoughts on today's devotional. All of us were like lost sheep. We were without hope. Knowing Christ, we are returned to the Great Shepherd, the guardian of our souls....

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

10/06/2017

### Your Church Family Matters

"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. Refrain; And sometimes we laugh together, sometimes we cry; sometimes we share  
together heartaches and sighs; Sometimes we dream together of how it will be; When we all get  
to heaven, God's family."

### God's Family by Lanny Wolfe 1974

The old term "blood is thicker than water" might be appropriate here as we take a quick look at our church family this morning. Each of us comes from a physical family, and we certainly know how it works. On an ideal level, it's supposed to work the way the Bible explains it. It might be noted, however, that it just doesn't always run smoothly, does it. I can speak from personal experience that sometimes hidden grudges can last for years and years. When the church was formed, it was intended to be a group of folks worshipping the Lord together in peace, love and harmony. Jesus took this idea to a new level.... Family is certainly an integral part of most people's lives, but our church family is there for us, even when our physical families might fail us. It is so very important to build up relationships with the people in our local church. One of the very remarkable things about our local church is that it grows as more folks come to the Lord. This provides the opportunity for us to develop new bonds with them and integrate them into the family as quickly as possible. It is part of our job to create an environment where people can grow and mature in the Lord. When times get tough, we can all serve as anchors for one another, making sure that the truth of God's Word is heeded. There is a special way in which the church serves as the hands and feet of God, and often we feel God's love through our church family. As the lyrics of the song say; "Sometimes we laugh together and sometimes we cry... Sometimes we share together heartaches and sighs".... As we look toward our goal in life, the last part of the refrain becomes especially poignant... "Sometimes we dream together of how it will be: When we all get to heaven, God's family".... I'm going to give you a chance to share this morning... In the blanks below, write the names of three (3) church members you are especially thankful for. Consider writing a note to one or all of them this week, letting them know that you are thankful for their example and encouragement...

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

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

10/07/2017  
You're Killing Me Smalls

Today's quiz is about murders in the Bible. The people in the left column are responsible for the deaths of those in the middle. Match the murderer with the murdereed and then, the reason in the 3rd column... I couldn't resist the title.... As always, have fun.

___ ___ 1. Cain	A. Amnon	a. Offering
___ ___ 2. David	B. Urijah (KJV)	b. Revenge
___ ___ 3. Joab	C. Abel	c. Throne
___ ___ 4. Benaiah	D. Uriah	d. Prophecy
___ ___ 5. Absalom	E. Joab	e. Persecution
___ ___ 6. Pekah	F. James	f. Solomon's instructions
___ ___ 7. Herod	G. Doeg	g. Hatred
___ ___ 8. Ahimelech	H. Pekahiah	h. Bathsheba
___ ___ 9. Jehoiakim	I. Abner	i. Saul's Instructions
___ ___ 10. Jael	J. Sisera	j. Enemy

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

10/09/2017  
For Righteousness Sake

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble" (1 Pet.3:8).

The death and resurrection of Jesus, followed by the coming of the Spirit to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, ushered in a new era. It resulted in the inauguration of the kingdom of God. When the church came into being, the kingdom was realized... The apostle Paul framed it this way; "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col.1:13-14). The kingdom is not something Christians await... It is here! Chosen by God, forgiven of sins and sanctified by grace, Christians are heirs of God. Unfortunately, it is a two-sided coin... On the other side of the coin, we live in a world where the devil lurks. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet.5:8). Greed, immorality, hatred and death were alive in the world when Peter wrote these words, and are still with us today... The blessings of the kingdom are an open door to all, but evil continues to assert its claim. God inaugurated the kingdom, but suffering continues to be the residue of sin and wants to infest the land we live in. In the Sermon On The Mount, Jesus finished the Beatitudes with this telling statement; "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:10). Paul wrote to the Colossians and to Timothy that suffering for one's belief might be an inevitability... This week's devotionals will reflect on that suffering and how Christians have the strength to deal with it....

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

10/10/2017  
Called To Be A Blessing

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble, Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Pet.3:8-9).

As we saw last week, submission, within its proper bounds, is a prerequisite and necessary component for a Christian life. As we look at today's verses, a Christian life is to be one of

harmony, sympathy, brotherly love, kindness and humility. Already Peter noted Jesus as one who was reviled, but did not return in kind. Submission offers an alternative way of life in a world of self-interest, violence and arrogant pride. To know Christ is to bless the world, but there is much more.... In 2 Cor.10:1, the apostle Paul defended his ministry as he said this; "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you...." Whatever blessing the meekness and gentleness of Christ offers to humans, Christians inherit the blessing many times over. The Lord has a blessing for those who curb their anger, cultivate a gentle spirit and control their speech. To take in the spirit of Christ is to literally imbibe and inherit a wonderful inward peace plus a clear sense of who one is and what life is about... The Christlike life is more than a prelude to eternal blessing as much less, it is the price to be paid for eternal blessing. The Christian life is the blessing itself... Finally, the Christian life when properly led, yields the fruit of peace. Peace is more than the absence of strife, and is even more than peace within that comes from knowing that one has the presence and power of God at his or her side. Again, as we see in today's verses, there is a wonderful communal aspect to peace, as it includes being at peace with others. The Christian is blessed with peace because the the eyes of the Lord look favorably upon him....

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

10/11/2017  
Suffering For Doing Good

"Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened' " (1 Pet.3:13-14).

In today's verses, Peter quotes from Psalm 34:12-13. I guess the big question here is this; If blessings are the lot of Christians, peace follows his steps and if the eyes of the Lord are upon him, just what is this suffering thing all about? Wouldn't one think that suffering nullifies the Christian blessing? Back in 1 Pet.1:6, he has already explained that his readers can expect to be distressed with trials, so it is now explanation time... There is an area of "overlap" that exists between the goals of Christians and of non-Christians. Lets face the facts here... All folks, regardless of their religious persuasion expect protection from lawlessness, and to enjoy the fruits of their labor. On the Christian side, we contribute to the world's peace through submission. Our goals are to respect the laws of the land, labor with a good spirit and build strong families. When a Christian submits to the laws of the land and live in subjection to Christ and do good, they "silence the ignorant talk of foolish men." (1 Pet.2:15). In the 1st of today's verses, Peter asks the rhetorical question, Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? No one, of course! This being said, Peter knows that this is not the entire story.... Situations may arise where those who claim Christ as Lord will have to suffer because they choose righteousness. They and we must be prepared for those times... Later (1 Pet.4:12) he

says not to be surprised at the fiery trial which is to try you... He echoes the words of the prophet Isaiah 8:12... And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it... Here's the kicker... We are to hold up the holiness of God through our good conduct! As they see this good behavior, they may ask where it comes from, so Peter gives us the sage advice of verse 15... "Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a good conscience." Why? "so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander...." As we allow our gentleness and reverence for the Lord to be apparent to all and we should suffer for it, know that we have suffered for doing what was right and not for doing wrong....

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

10/12/2017  
Christ's Suffering For Sins

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God" (1 Pet.3:18).

Back in chapter two, Peter touched on the vicarious atonement of Christ by writing this; "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth" (Vs 22). He wants to make sure and reaffirm that his readers understand that through the sufferings of Christ, the price has been paid for sins... When one comes to Christ in faith and obedience, sins are forgiven. The price of a Christian's sins have been paid vicariously by Jesus on the cross, and consequently, one enjoys peace with God. In the process of explaining his claim for the work of Christ, Peter looks to God's judgement on sin in the days of Noah... There is a beautiful parallel drawn between God's saving the people of Noah's day through the water and His saving Christians through baptism. Noah and his world bring judgement to mind... A Christian should always be aware that God will judge the world through Jesus Christ, as there will be an accounting for sin. The parallel drawn is crystal clear.... "in it (the ark) only a few people were saved, eight in all, were saved through the water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you ----- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God" (20-21). Peter's words ring through the corridors of time.... and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you.... Though it is the only explicit reference about baptism in the letter, it makes a clear statement. Obedience to God in baptism is integral to faith, and there is no faith without its willing expression in a bodily act. Paul explains this too; "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom.6:4). In and through baptism, God moves the lost sinner into the body of the redeemed...

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



10/13/2017  
Family History

"For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and passed through the sea.... Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness... Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things..." (1 Cor.10:1, 5-6).

There has always been a curiosity on peoples part to know stuff about their ancestors. Back in the old days, folks depended on older members of their family to supply word of mouth information which would be meticulously written in family albums. As we have entered the cyber age, websites like Ancestry.com have made tracing family history easier and more exact.

Typically, people also want to know about the struggles of their ancestors, which can only be found in written records kept by someone who was interested in the same thing. Christians want to know about their "religious ancestors" too. Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua and the thousands who made the journey from Egypt to Canaan are ancestors of the Christian family... They were people of God ---- people learning to live by faith, people coming to learn the royal law of loving one's neighbor as himself... (Lev.19:18; Jas.2:8). In today's verses, Paul wrote about what happened to Israel in the wilderness. Why? "Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things..." It is with confidence that a Christian today may say that "Moses and Joshua were our fathers" A Christian can learn from their nobility and their humanity as they learn from all Bible characters. After the coming of Christ, the Christian family has come to realize that the calling and forming of Israel was a part of God's grand scheme of redemption. When Paul wrote the Israel of God in Gal.6:16, he had the church in mind... Those who have found the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith have inherited the true promised land... Theirs (ours) is the promise of eternal life.

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

10/14/2017  
She Loves Me, She Loves Me Not

Life is often marked by the things one loves, and its not always people... In today's quiz you are to match the person with the object of his or her love... You'll love me for this later...

- |                 |                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------|
| _____ 1. Christ | (a) Husbandry (the soil) |
| _____ 2. Father | (b) An adulteress        |

_____ 3. God	(c) Salutations
_____ 4. Isaac	(d) Tamar
_____ 5. Amnon	(e) World
_____ 6. Young Ruler	(f) Rachel
_____ 7. Uzziah	(g) Savory meat
_____ 8. Jacob	(h) Prodigal son
_____ 9. Scribes	(i) Church
_____ 10. Hosea	(j) Possessions

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

10/16/2017  
Suffering As A Christian

"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.....' For you know it was not with perishable things such as silver and gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life that was handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet.1: 15, 18).

If the theme of today's title sounds like last week, your eyes do not deceive you. To Peter and his readers, the blessings of being a Christian were incalculable. As we see in verse 18, they and we have been redeemed from a relatively empty way of life. We have come to know the joy found in being a part of the Christian brotherhood. (1:22). Through Christ we have been born again of imperishable seed, and God has made us living stones in a spiritual house; we are a chosen race... (2:5, 9). Though this looks like a rosy picture, the blessings come at a price, but a price well worth paying. Especially in Peter's day, the suffering was real.... Evil was in the world as it is today, therefore Christians suffered. As Peter's 1st epistle continues, festering trials and afflictions are never far from the surface, as Satan ruled the worldly realm. As we are to do with one another each day, Peter exhorted and encouraged those who would read and listen. He reminded his readers that Jesus was Lord, He died for their sins and was coming again... They (we) had confessed Christ. They (we) know the truth. They (we) are a holy people... The world will not defeat us! Just how do we cope with being hounded and despised for our faith? Here

are some of Peter's Spirit inspired ways; (1) Respond to injustice with holy and godly living. (2) Let integrity filled goodness be your badge of glory. (3) Overcome evil with good. (4) Find strength in your weakness. (5) Because of your good deeds, non-believers would glorify God in the day of visitation. (6) Instead of returning evil for evil we are to receive a blessing. Finally, Peter advises his readers to live so that those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame... (3:16). This should be some good stuff to get your week going in the right direction...

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

10/17/2017

### Suffering And A Look At The Past

"Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his life for evil desires, but rather for the will of God" (1 Pet.4:1-2).

Jesus came from heaven to take human form, fully aware that he would suffer. When men and women confess Christ as their Savior, they become partners with Him in a world enterprise for goodness. We would all do well to adopt the mindset of Jesus and understand this simple fact; To live a godly life may certainly involve suffering for doing right, and in being a Christian we may face resistance. The price a Christian pays is testimony to the past life he or she has rejected, and a redeemed life they have embraced. When folks suffer for what they believe, that willingness testifies to the seriousness with which they have embraced Christ. Suffering with Christ is a sure sign that one has forsaken their past life of sin... That is why Peter says in today's 1st verse that he who has suffered in his body is done with sin... It is a clear indication that one who is willing to suffer for Christ's sake has made a "clean break" with his or her past life. No one who really knows Christ, looks back at that past life of sin with longing. Rather, they look back at those things they used to wrongly do with a wearisome grin and a shake of the head. Why? Because they recall that they were once enslaved. Our past lives were self-destructive, and when we put them in our rear view mirror, we see how destructive they were... Peter looks at us, and then at our former associates who are still wallowing in sins, (see vs 3) and writes these telling words; "They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they will heap abuse on you" (Vs 4)... Both believers and non-believers experience life in the flesh, and both will one day have to give an account for what they have done. Isn't it wonderful that we have found the better life...

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

10/18/2017

### Suffering And The Present

"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Pet.4:12-13).

Peter directly addresses the suffering of his readers for Christ's sake in 1 Peter four (4) times, but none approach the vehemence of this section. (1 Pet.4:12-19). Peter asks a very interesting rhetorical question in 3:13 in which he implies that Christians were not likely to suffer for doing good..... It goes like this; "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good?" However, they should not be surprised at suffering that was attendant to their embracing "the name." "If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you" (4:14). Faith will be tested by fire... The Lord had suffered and they (possibly we) may follow in His steps. It is important to know that in their suffering they had a cause for joy, because suffering testified to one's faith. At the revelation of Christ, faith would be their solace, and ours too. Even if turmoil may be in our "present," exultation will be our reward in the age to come... As we have seen in 4:14, it is a blessing to suffer for the name of Christ. The one who cares enough for his faith to endure the scorn and insults of those who despise the cross of Jesus and its implications, can wear his or her suffering as a badge of honor. Why? Because it testifies that God is with him, and that the Spirit of glory attends his way... Suffering is not a thing to be sought, but if it comes, we shouldn't be caught by surprise. Peter is echoing the words of Jesus who said this; "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be My disciple" (Lk.14:27). Throughout his letter. Peter is concerned that none of his readers suffer for having actually done wrong, even though they or we may have... It is so tempting to retaliate and return evil for evil, but we must not. Let's all strive to be what the Lord wants us to be....

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

10/19/2017

### Suffering And The Future

"However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise the name of God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgement to begin with the family of God, and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet.4:16-17).

One of the places to which the epistle of 1st Peter was sent according to 1 Peter 1:1 was Bithynia. Early in the 2nd century, not too long after Peter wrote this letter, the Roman Emperor Trajan sent out an envoy to straighten out the administration of cities in Bithynia. His name was Pliny, and while he was in the area, he wrote several letters back to Trajan that have survived over the centuries. In one of these famous letters, Pliny mentioned Christians, and he did not know how to deal with them. One of the questions he asked was this one; "Should I punish Christians because of specific crimes they have committed, or is it enough to punish them for the mere fact that they own 'the name' " We can see from an early secular source that Christians have faced discrimination, imprisonment and death because they "owned the name..." Christians may have to suffer because they own the name, but Peter said this about their persecutors; "But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet.4:5). In being a Christian, one may have to experience the refining fires of life, but it is nothing compared to the judgement the Lord would bring on those who do not obey the gospel of God. Look up at today's 2nd verse for affirmation of this. A modern phrase used to bolster this is one that is used in advertising today. It says; "You can pay me now, or you can pay me later..." Peter is trying to teach a very important lesson about Christian behavior here, and about the difficulties that might accompany a Christian life. He urges his readers to adopt such a holy and godly life, that the name of Christ will be honored. We are never to resort to dishonesty or retaliation. We do what is right when we entrust ourselves into the hands of our faithful Lord. How are we doing in this department?

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

10/20/2017

### Sitting Down With A Good Mystery

"And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment..." (Eph.1:9-10).

I don't know if the term I used to make my title this morning is still a common one, but have you heard it before? One of the genres of fictional books over the years has been the mystery novel.

We all know how it works, as a good mystery novelist takes us through a set of twisting circumstances in which we try to guess and read our way toward what the conclusion might be. Mystery is a word that is characteristic of the book of Ephesians, as it is used six (6) times in the letter. I'm actually guilty of using some "smoke and mirrors" so far, to get you interested in some mysterious aspect of the Bible that you have never heard before... A mystery in New Testament parlance is not really something concealed or mysterious at all... It is a matter unknown in the past now uncovered or revealed. "Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I

have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit of God's holy apostles and prophets" (Eph.3:3-5). What is the mystery? Other generations have not understood the deliberate, orderly management of human affairs as God guided them toward the carrying out of His will... As we look back, we see the design in Christ to be evident. From the perspective of the cross, the mystery has been unveiled. For the children of Israel, the inheritance was Canaan's land, but for those in Christ, it is much more wonderful. To take it one step forward, that the Gentiles should inherit the blessings of God with the Jews is the result of His orderly arrangement of unfolding events in human history... Church life where all are one body in Christ has been God's design from the beginning. So.... How did you enjoy the mystery?

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

10/21/2017  
Silver And Gold

The two precious metals often mentioned in the Bible are silver and gold. In today's quiz you are to match the name on the left with the proper statement about silver and gold... Sorry... No free samples.

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Abram           | (a) Called to work with silver and gold                   |
| ___ 2. Peter           | (b) Coveted no man's silver and gold                      |
| ___ 3. Israelite women | (c) Commanded Israelites to burn gold and silver          |
| ___ 4. Bezaleel        | (d) Had no silver and gold to give                        |
| ___ 5. Moses           | (e) Made silver and gold as common as stones              |
| ___ 6. Disciples       | (f) Commanded to borrow silver and gold jewelry           |
| ___ 7. Paul            | (g) Wealthy in silver and gold                            |
| ___ 8. Asa             | (h) Told not to carry silver and gold on a mission        |
| ___ 9. Solomon         | (i) Showed his silver and gold to men who later seized it |
| ___ 10. Jehoash        | (j) Plundered silver and gold from the Temple             |

\_\_\_11. Hezekiah

(k) Sent gold and silver to Ben-Hadad

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

10/23/2017

### Humility And Faithfulness Among Leaders

"The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed; Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly" (1 Pet.5:1-2).

In corporate America, leadership and authority would certainly be strange bedfellows with humility and faithfulness. Many of the "great men" of the world exercise their power with either overbearing force, or more subtly, with money... When an army officer barks out a command, he expects it to be obeyed. When an executive on Wall Street throws money at a problem, he does so with expectations that his underlings will rapidly do his bidding. Jesus turned that thinking upside down with these words; "It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant" (Matt.20:26). Weakness and strength, power and servitude, meekness and might have been reversed among the people of God. The apostle Paul believed he was at his strongest when he was weak... "Therefore I am content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor.12:10). In today's two verses, Peter is writing about the leadership among the 1st century churches, as he talked about elders. Peter grounded leadership in the church of Christ on the moral authority of faithful men who set their hearts on servitude. As an apostle, Peter served the universal church, but as an elder he served a local congregation. Jesus set the tone as a Shepherd of His people, (1 Pet.2:25) and elders in local congregations were to committed to oversee the flock. Unlike soldiers and corporate leaders, elders did not wield a "big stick," and were to exercise leadership without using force, money or coercion... Church leaders are to serve by example because of the respected men they had proven themselves to be. Though headaches and heartbreaks might accompany their work, their efforts for the Lord would not go on unnoticed.... "And not as lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away... " (1 Pet.5:3-4). We will study humility and faithfulness from the pen of Peter this week. Stay around for the ride...

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

10/24/2017

## The Young And Old Alike

"You younger men, likewise be subject to your elders; and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet.5:5).

Last week, the lessons were about obedience and submission. There was submission to governments, slaves to masters and to Christ, and now Peter is adding another important dimension.... Younger Christians, Peter declares, are to be subject to the elders, and that is the fourth dimension. You younger men, likewise be subject (submission) to your elders... Since the eldership as an office is in the immediate context here, Peter is most likely instructing younger Christians to be submissive to elders in the church, not to older men in general... Good leaders will always have a following, and folks looking for good leaders will do that following. Elders are to serve the Lord and the church with humility, not lording their authority over others. Just as Christians are to display their goodness to those around them, the elders are to guide by example. We come to a wonderful watershed verse next. It is a verse that we ought to have written on our hearts as a credo for life. "Therefore, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time..." (1 Pet.5:6). Peter goes back to the book of Proverbs to bring his point across; "He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble" (3:34). I seem to remember one of Jesus' parables from Lk.14:7-10 in which he taught about a man seeking the best seat at a banquet. The lesson of the parable was this in verse eleven (11); "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Like his Master Jesus, Peter tells his readers that God will exalt those who humbled themselves. The Great Shepherd is the Lord Jesus, and those who humbly cast their cares on Him will find a God who always cares. To resist Satan, we need all the help we can get. Prayer, meditation and Bible study are great resources, but there is hardly a resource for spiritual strength that compares to the fellowship of fellow believers...

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

10/25/2017

The Great God Of Grace

"And the God of all grace, who called you to your eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast" (1 Pet.5:10).

It is obvious that the people Peter was writing to were going through trying times or were destined to because of their faith. Even today, when Christians face those same trying times, the hard questions are inevitable. Questions like; Why does God let us suffer? Why has this disease stricken me? Why do I live with pain? Why are wicked people prospering? Why doesn't God do something about all this? I may assume that Peter's 1st century readers had not faced



the persecution and ridicule when they worshiped the gods their friends and families still served.... Peter's response is found in today's verse. Suffering was for just a little while, and soon the God of all grace will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast... Like airplane pilots of the old days that flew without instruments, Peter tells us that we are to keep our eyes on the the horizon. Why? Because the Lord will return. Many years before Peter penned these words, psalmists understood their own suffering similar to what Peter was writing about. When faced with evil, they reasoned that it was temporary, and God's will would triumph... "Surely you set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction" (Psa.73:18). Peter asserted a very important Christian mantra... Grace is never ending with God, as it is essential to His very being. His grace had been experienced by the recipients of Peter's letter when they had been saved from their sins through baptism, just as it is today... They lived in grace, nevertheless, more grace was yet to be realized... They lived in anticipation of that day... Soon Peter's readers would experience the eternal glory that God has prepared for His people. If we reread today's verse, we'll find this. What Peter promises will happen through the Lord. It doesn't get any better than this.... God Himself will restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast....

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

10/26/2017  
A Wonderful Farewell

"Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! ..... Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace be to all of you who are in Christ" (1 Pet.5:12 & 14).

I find many of the ways that epistle writers "sign off" their letters to be fascinating. The end of 1 Peter is no exception, and Peter ends his letter in a way that was familiar with his readers. A faithful brother named Silvanus might have helped Peter to write. Perhaps he asked Silvanus to serve him as a scribe, or maybe he was the one who was to carry the letter to the churches... There are a couple of really important things that Peter wants his readers to keep in mind as he closes. We find one of the main purposes of the letter in today's verse that says; I have written to you briefly, exhorting.... This was all about strengthening the fledgling churches. Hmmm... Would that work today? Further, it was to testify that this is the true grace of God. I believe what Peter is doing in this salutation is something that rings down through time to all of us today.

God's kingdom here on earth, the church, is paramount in importance. Peter's letter has underscored the closeness and support that 1st century Christians, and Christians in 2017 are to have for one another. Peter's last two pieces of advice also ring true not only then, but today also... They were "to greet one another with a kiss of love..." (Vs.14). You might remember the apostle Paul's similar words in Rom.16:16, greet one another with a holy kiss. I think that this kiss of love or holy kiss is to remind all of us about the true affection that Christians are to have for one another. The ultimate results are found in Peters' last words of the letter... "Peace be to

all of you who are in Christ" God's people are at their very best when they stand together under the banner of Christ, loving and supporting one another... How does that sound to you?

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

10/27/2017  
Reliance On prayer

"For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers..." (Eph.1:15-16).

We rejoice over them and sometime weep because of them. What's "them?" Our lives are shaped by events. To put it quite bluntly, things happen... If we actually get more to the point, many of the things that happen in our lives are out of our control. Tomorrow is to be anticipated because it may open up to us new experiences and challenges, or it may bring calamitous weather, fire, natural disasters, or even death. As long as we eat and breath, life and death are before us. Uncertainty about the future is enough to make us want to ball up into a fetal position and hide... As I am framing this dank picture about a future that could be almost unbearable, Christians have a ray of light. When the unknown looms before us, by prayer, believers have an ally for what lies ahead. Few people faced as much turmoil or challenge in their lives as the apostle Paul. He relied on prayer as we see in today's verses to help him face a world that knew virtually nothing about Jesus Christ... He prayed that people would be brought to know Christ, but after that he did not leave them alone. Through prayer, he continued to be at their sides. Paul wanted his readers to know that he prayed for them, but there's more. He also wanted them to know what his petitions were about. Prayer is a personal talk with God. It is what one says to God.... Properly speaking, what the apostle wrote to the Ephesians was not his prayer, but it was the kinds of things he sought for them in his prayers. The concern of the apostle was for his readers ---- for their spiritual growth and prosperity. Paul set the tone for us, as we are to be concerned about one another in a world of uncertainty... As we pray for others, and ourselves, the chief concern is that God will be glorified in all that we say and do... "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known by God" (Phil.4:5).

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

10/28/2017  
Mothers And Daughters

Few mothers and daughters are mentioned in the Bible. In today's quiz, you are to match the mom with her daughter. As always. have fun..

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| ___ 1. Instructed her daughter to ask for John the Baptist's head            | (a) Naomi              |
| ___ 2. Became a mother to her daughter-in-law                                | (b) Hagar              |
| ___ 3. Mom and daughter lauded by Paul                                       | (c) Dinah              |
| ___ 4. Daughter who watched her brother in a basket/boat.                    | (d) Deborah            |
| ___ 5. Daughter of Leah and Jacob  | (e) Rebekah            |
| ___ 6. Prophetess whose mom was unknown                                      | (f) Lot's wife         |
| ___ 7. She was a salty mom.  | (g) Herodias           |
| ___ 8. Daughter-in-law picked by a servant                                   | (h) Gomer              |
| ___ 9. She left her daughters often, but was forgiven by her husband<br>Lois | (i) Eunice and<br>Lois |
| ___ 10. This mom actually chose her daughter-in-law                          | (j) Miriam             |

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

10/30/2017  
The Adorning Of A Christian

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, kindness; and to kindness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love..." (2 Pet.1:5-7).

It is not altogether unusual for the New Testament to string together lists of vices (bad stuff) or lists of virtues (good stuff). For most of us, the best known of these are the apostle Paul's writings in the book of Galatians... He lists the bad stuff followed by the good stuff in Gal.5:19-23. Not too far behind in terms of frequency of citation is the list of "Christian graces" that are found in today's verses from 2 Peter. If you want to do a bit of "comparison shopping," why don't you compare what we commonly know as the "fruit of the Spirit" in Gal.5:22-23 with today's list from 2 Peter. They overlap with a few points. Both of them include faith, love,

kindness, and self-control, but after those, they go their separate ways... Lists of vices or virtues can provide quick and convenient reference points. If you are a social person, you probably recognize that the personalities and habits of people, including ourselves, are complex. Along with this, the proper "Christlike" response can at times be elusive.... For example, how would one balance being generous with a beggar against feeding into an alcohol or drug problem, when being generous might be supporting irresponsibility. That's a tough one, isn't it... It is against this backdrop that we will look at a rather complicated issue this week. In the absence of a direct word from God for each individual, God gives Christians these broad principles to guide them. The principles are summarized in lists like the one found in 2 Peter 1:5-7. Why don't we all read and meditate on 2 Peter 1:5-15 to get us prepared this week's devotionals. This might be helpful to all of us.

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

10/31/2017

### Having A Virtue Sandwich

"Faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.... If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.1:5-8).

South Jersey is famous for several foods, one of which is the "submarine sandwich" (sub to the locals). In some circles it is called a "hoagie." The classic sub is a combination of Italian meats, Provolone cheese, lettuce, tomato, onions, oil and hot peppers. What makes it even more special is the fresh Atlantic City roll that all of this stuff is packed into. Today's list of positive qualities is like that sub, in that there are six (6) fillings encompassed by a special bread. Faith and love comprise the roll, while goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness and brotherly kindness make up the fillings.... I hope I have made you hungry for more.... These qualities have been referred to as either virtues or graces, but either will do in stating their purpose. Notwithstanding, all of these qualities comprise a list of things whose possession by an individual will serve to please the Lord. To explore all of them adequately require book-like treatment, so reading and meditating on them will have to do for the present. Perhaps a look at the last two virtues brotherly kindness (sometimes called brotherly love) and love show that they seem to overlap. Both of them deal with love. Though most of us are not Greek scholars, I'm sure we've heard about the different words used in that language for love... Brotherly kindness (love) comes from the Greek word philadelphia, and assumes a family flavor for church relationships. The last word on the list, love, comes from the Greek word agape, which is a God-like love. Have you heard a sermon or two about these words? Peter's list of virtues is hardly intended to be exhaustive, as other graces could certainly be added to this list. This appears to be certain to me; Peter's list builds on the foundation of initial confession and obedience. These graces, when inhaled into the Christian character, result in fruitful knowledge. Knowledge is no "stand alone" virtue... Like faith or love, knowledge is to God's glory only when

it bears fruit. These graces that Peter lays before his readers are the fruit that follow and produce the knowledge of Christ. Without the fruit, knowledge is either nonexistent or useless....

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

