

04/01/2015
Who Do You Trust

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight" (Prov.3:5-6).

I will date myself by telling you that I remember watching a TV show in my youth called Who Do You Trust. What made the show famous is that the emcee was Johnny Carson, and his was sidekick, Ed McMahon. It was a quiz show consisting of three pairs of contestants, usually a man and his wife. Johnny would announce the category and then ask the man, "Who Do You Trust" to answer the question, you or your wife. It made for much comedic bi-play, and ran from 1957-1963, with Carson and McMahon leaving in 1962 to host The Tonight Show. This is a segue into my devotional today, that deals with trust in the Lord. Praise the Lord that He did not leave alone to navigate through the difficulties of life. King David said, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path" (Psa.119:105). Some time later, King Solomon wrote the words of today's scripture... So often we make the important plans of our lives without including God in them. I know that we may have our own ideas about what we need most in life, but we will find that only God's plans will help us to survive the trials, turmoils and tribulations of this life... "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand" (Prov.19:21). I would like to spend the next couple of days in exploring how we ought to put our trust in the Lord. If we are to be the light of the world that we are called to be, that light is to be the reflected light of Jesus Christ. Lets all spend a bit of time today in meditation in just how we can be the Christians we are called to be by trusting in the Lord. So..... The question of the day is.... Who Do You Trust?

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

04/02/2015
A Trust In God's Provision

"Consider the the lilies of the field, (how they grow); Consider the lilies of the field, (how they grow); They toil not, (they toil not); They toil not (they toil not); they toil not neither do they spin; (neither do they spin), And yet I say unto you, (unto you), That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, (was not arrayed) like one of these, like one of these...."

From "Great Songs Of The Church" # 542

One of the things that comes from changing hymn books in a church is leaving a few songs that you love and cherish behind. The song that I used today instead of a scripture is just one of those songs. I enjoy it for its lovely interplay between the women's and men's parts and its

wonderful melody. I also love it because of the words that come from Matt.6:28-29... If life in the Lord has taught us anything, surely we have learned that God will provide for His people. We like to read in the Book of Exodus about the people's journey through the wilderness after their escape from Egypt. One of the reasons is the provision of the manna, quail, water and everlasting shoes as God took care of them. The words of Jesus ring loudly in our ears as He asks us to consider the lilies of the field and how they grow. He tries to relieve us from the anxieties of life and then gives us the capstone... "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt.6:33). Some 600 years before it came into existence, God made it clear that nothing could destroy His church... "In the time of those kings, the God of heavens will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, it will itself endure forever" (Dan.2:44). Jesus reiterated this fact (Matt.16:18-20) by saying that not even the gates of hell would be able to overcome His church... Here in NJ, as the daffodils are set to bloom and the trees are about to bud, we are reminded of God's constant care for us in the renewing of the seasons. It is enough for me to understand the wonders of God's provision for us... How about you?

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

04/03/2015
7,000 Promises

"Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature...." (2 Pet.1:4).

For those of you who are impressed by numbers or are maybe just awed by them, its been suggested that within the covers of the Bible there are in excess of 7,000 promises. To take the impressiveness of that number a step farther, one of the beauties of God's promises lies in our ability to read them and see how they were fulfilled... We live in a world where promises are often either ignored or only partially kept. The sheer comfort and encouragement we receive from how so many God's promises are kept is amazing. The real kicker is in the knowledge that He will, in time, or in eternity, fulfill every promise He has made. Today's verse from 2 Peter says that in those promises and their fulfillment, we may participate in the divine nature.... His divine nature! I've got one more magnificent thought for all of us today. "For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does He withhold for those whose walk is blameless. O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you" (Psa 84:11-12). One of the great promises from God is this... God will bless those who put their complete trust in Him. They will become greater servants... Greater people of prayer.... Greater comforters... Greater encouragers... All of these things are neatly wrapped within the trust we have in His promises.

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

04/04/2015

Some Challenging Questions

I hope you enjoy trying to recall some Bible facts. As always, have fun....

- _____ 1. The Jewish exorcists that tried to cast out an evil spirit were the "seven sons of _____." (a) Thunder, (b) Sceva, (c) Gheza, (d) Evil.
- _____ 2. "And Cush begat _____. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord." (a) Gibeon, (b) Micah, (c) Nimrod, (d) Azel.
- _____ 3. What queen did Esther replace? (a) Vashti, (b) Sheba, (c) Candace, (d) Jezebel.
- _____ 4. What Bible character was called "The Tishbite?" (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Obadiah, (d) Eleazer.
- _____ 5. Who in the Bible did God ask to put his tears in a bottle? (a) Jeremiah, (b) Peter, (c) Moses, (d) David.
- _____ 6. The archangel Michael disputed with the devil about the body of _____. (a) Jesus, (b) Moses, (c) David, (d) Abraham.
- _____ 7. Just after his death, Eli's daughter-in law gave birth to a son named _____. (a) Hophni, (b) Ichabod, (c) Phineas, (d) Elkanah.
- _____ 8. What name was Peter not known by? (a) Cephas, (b) Simon, (c) Simpson, (d) Simeon.
- _____ 9. Who said; "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" (a) Saul, (b) Goliath, (c) Nahash, (d) Jonathan.
- _____ 10. Who was the 98 year old obese and partially blind man, that fell off his chair and broke his neck? (a) Bartimaeus, (b) Jacob, (c) Eli, (d) Ehud.

I hope that all of you have an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His Day.... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/06/2015

The Dreaded 80/20

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?.... You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden" (Matt.5:13-14).

Have you ever heard of Vilfredo Pareto? He was an Italian engineer, sociologist, economist and political scientist who lived from 1848-1923. He came up with what we have come to know as the "Pareto principle", more commonly referred to as the law of the few... It says that in many organizations, 20% of the people do 80% of the work. Unfortunately, this may happen in the church too. Today's verses tell me that Jesus didn't think like this. Perhaps one of the great challenges facing the church today when it comes to growth is about that 80%. Sadly, many members can fall prey to the temptation of politely excusing themselves from active participation....There are many justifications for either inactive or partially active service. Some may think that time restraints are so strong that there are just not enough hours in the day... Some may have been active, but have grown older and decided to let the younger folks take the lead. Maybe there is the infamous preacher mentality... "Hey, we're paying that guy to do the church's work, we're just regular members that do stuff on an as-needed basis..." Simply put, Christianity is about participation and not passivity... Jesus and the apostles want us to get into the game... Salt and light do no good unless they are used correctly. The salt and light imagery tell us that both are easily detected when present, and terribly missed when absent. Lets get introspective and see the unique set of talents, experiences and abilities we actually have. Then, lets put those to use in a profitable way for the Lord's work. If that 20/80 thing is really true, lets shoot for the 20...

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

04/072015

Up Close And Personal

"All the believers were together and had everything in common... They broke bread in their homes and ate together with sincere hearts...." (Acts 2:44, 46).

As we see in today's verses, and in many others, the members of the early church put their personal faith on the line by having a deep sense of camaraderie... The activities described are a result of an active and personal faith... Some time later, the apostle Paul gave us that famous list of virtues we have come to know as the fruit of the Spirit. If we do an examination of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, we ought to be overwhelmed by this conclusion... These qualities can only be exemplified and practiced within the framework of personal relationships. We cannot be any of those things in a vacuum. When echoing the greatest command about loving the Lord with all your heart and with all your

soul and with all your mind, Jesus didn't end it with just that. His very next words were: "And love your neighbor as yourself..." (Matt.22:37-39). It is clear that Paul did not limit the range of one's service to only those of the same faith... "Let us not grow weary in doing good.... Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people..." (Gal.6:9-10). Now don't get me wrong, it is vitally important for members of a church group to show care and concern of each other... A few snippets of scripture say: "Let love be genuine..." "Love one another with brotherly affection..." "Outdo one another in showing honor..." "Contribute to the needs of the saints and show hospitality..." (Rom.12: 9, 10, 13)... I find one very common thread running through all of this, and lay it on me if you think I'm wrong.... If we are to do all that we can do to promote the cause of Christ, Up Close And Personal works better...

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

04/08/2015
The Power of Altruism

"If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? If you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt.5:46-48).

In our present society, jaded as it is, those who are skeptical of pure Christian altruism, are always looking for "the angle." The dictionary defines altruism this way: "Feelings and behavior that show a desire to help other people and a lack of selfishness." Our contemporary society looks at Christian behavior with a jaundiced eye and assumes that when people do good, there is always a hidden agenda that is motivating them, Jesus set the tone for human behavior in the Sermon On The Mount. Today's verses give us a great start to altruism. Jesus begins with the love that we have for each other, and even extends it to whom we greet. I believe that New Testament teachings demand altruism, or the the unselfish concern for the welfare of others. It ought to be the trademark of Christian living...In the gospel of John, chapter 13, Jesus washes the feet of the disciples. This is an act of humility, expressing to them and us that we should be willing to practice even the most menial tasks for one another. Christianity has this wonderful altruistic component to it. The component is that it is focused not only on God and self, but also on the concerns of others who need our help. It is part of our task to prove to the world that Christian behavior toward others is pure. Through our actions, we reflect Jesus' teachings in their most pristine form. Instead of "what's in it for me," it is "what can I do to help...."

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

04/09/2015
Without An Angle

"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matt.26:39).

Jesus lived His entire life, right up until the end, with a servant attitude. Maybe the opposite of this attitude might be called egoism. The egoist always looks for a self-serving angle before doing good stuff. Jesus never did! "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick" (Matt.14:14). Jesus exhibited loving compassion on those who needed Him. He throws the selfish and "looking for an angle" attitude out the window with the great parable of the Good Samaritan... The Samaritan who helped the wounded man by showing compassion on him, did so without an angle. I believe that Jesus wants us to be people with that same attitude of serving without expectation of reciprocation. I guess the big question of the day might be this... Is this servant attitude possible for us today? I believe this, and I hope you do too. The longer one walks with Jesus, the more he or she will naturally (maybe even automatically) have the desire to help others. Not only that, they will do so without stopping to think of any possible reward... If we really want to be Christ-like, we will view Christian charity as a norm for human behavior. I have a good friend who always includes this phrase in his correspondences... "Do right for no other reason than because it is right..." I like it, how about you?

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

04/10/2015
Faith In The Sunrise

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ----- and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...." (Eph.2:8).

The sunrise in NJ happened at 6:29 this morning. It was cloudy and foggy, but it came up right on time, just as predicted... Yesterday it rose at 6:31. Because of the movement of the earth and moon, we can trust these times to be accurate, and have faith in them, even though we might not understand the physics. The apostle Paul made it crystal clear, as we see in today's verse, that the blessings of God come by grace through faith... The reason we have hope and life is rooted in God's grace. Our role in this is to give ourselves in faith to God through Christ. After getting to experience the grace of God, He calls for the response of faith. Just as the information about the sunrise can be made known to us, faith begins with the understanding, which, in turn, is predicated on revelation. Human limitations that are spiritual, mental and even physical, mean that we cannot come to know God from intuitive senses within. Because of what He has shown Himself to be, we know Him as a God of grace. The Old Testament attests to God's long history with mankind, and culminates with the coming of His Son Jesus... That is His self-revelation,

which is His grace in action. Just as we can trust the times of the sunrise through scientific data, faith is born in the concrete events of time... The singular event that was brought to everyone's mind this past Sunday, the resurrection of Jesus, is God's declaration that Jesus is His Son... The apostles taught it and wrote about it, and our encounter with this teaching has brought us to God. For the saved, it results in the confession of faith. Its as real as the sunrise...

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

04/11/2015
Some Trivia Questions

I hope you enjoy testing your Bible recollection with a few questions. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What is the Bible's shortest verse? (a) Serve the Lord, (b) I can do all things, (c) Jesus wept, (d) In the beginning.
- _____ 2. What Bible character accidentally hanged himself in a tree? (a) Absalom, (b) Judas, (c) Haman, (d) Mephibosheth.
- _____ 3. How many children did Jacob have? (a) 9, (b) 11, (c) 12, (d) 13.
- _____ 4. What type of bird fed the prophet Elijah? (a) a dove, (b) a raven, (c) an eagle, (d) a sparrow.
- _____ 5. What's the longest chapter in the Bible? (a) Luke 1, (b) Matthew 28, (c) Psalms 119, (d) Psalms 117.
- _____ 6. How many days was Noah on the ark before it started to rain? (a) 3, (b) 5, (c) 7, (d) it was raining already.
- _____ 7. What book contains the words "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (a) Proverbs, (b) Isaiah, (c) Ezra, (d) Jeremiah.
- _____ 8. What king was holding a feast when handwriting appeared on the wall? (a) Belshazzar, (b) Nebuchadnezzar, (c) Darius, (d) Xerxes.
- _____ 9. Who was the woman who slept at the feet of her future husband? (a) Naomi, (b) Priscilla, (c) Ruth, (d) Sapphira.
- _____ 10. A red cord in a window saved someone and their family. Who was the person? (a) Ruth, (b) Rahab, (c) Moses, (d) Daniel.

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

04/13/2015
Faith Plus

"How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" (Rom.10:14)

A scientist looks at his data, believes it, and then moves on. There is no emotional attachment to the fact that the earth moves around the sun or how photosynthesis works. He will adjust his thinking when new data appears. For the Christian, faith is belief, but it is more than belief... It also entails trust and obedience. The believer is not at all tentative about the confession that Jesus is the Son of God. The Christian gives not only his mind to God, but also his heart. Faith in Christ requires both one's heart and will, as an obedient response is dyed into the fabric of that faith... If obedience fails, faith has not measured up to the faith that saves. Water is a wonderful, life sustaining substance, but it has a problem... As a liquid, it has no exact form of its own and needs a vessel to transport it from place to place to perform its function. Belief without faith and obedience, is like that water without some type of container to transport it... That response of faith is more than some emotional turmoil or a moment in time when the sinner allows Jesus to enter his heart... It is an all-embracing way of life that will allow for repentance and change. Our Bibles will allow us to read about how to live by faith...

Have a great start to your week.... Why not begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/14/2015
Is It Faith or Works?

"If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about ---- but not before God. What does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation..." (Rom.4:2-4).

Many of the apostle Paul's contemporaries held that Abraham was justified by his deeds or works, but the fact is that he was not, and therefore all boasting on his part is excluded... This leads us to the question that has echoed through the corridors of time, being, "Is a sinner saved by faith or works?" Today's verses ought to put that question to rest. The New Testament

teaches that all people are sinners, (Rom.3:23) and today's verses say that no one can save him or her selves on their own merit...I think that the confusion sets in when folks fail to make a distinction between works of merit that do not save and works that flow from faith... Lets make sure that we see the entire picture however. Faith does save, but faith without works is a contradiction of terms in the greatest sense. Paul was very careful to distinguish between meritorious works and works of faith... Many people, even in the religious world, want to dismiss this as much ado about nothing, but it is decidedly not. Works of merit, just for merit's sake are an affront to God, because one demands justification simply on the basis of what has been done... A humble response to the offer of God's grace in Christ through obedience of His commands is no claim to salvation by merit alone. Faith in God and obedience to him walk hand in hand. Sadly, when people separate faith from obedience, they may move to an emotion-driven faith that easily slips in and out of sin without considering the consequences... Taking a peek at the title this morning, we can clearly make a definitive answer....

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

04/15/2015
From The Heart

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful" (Col.3:15).

Our Bibles talk about the heart all the time. Not in the generic sense, but the spiritual... Not about the organ that pumps blood to our bodies, but the one that has to do with thinking about what is right and wrong and hopefully guiding us to the right. It is certainly easy to be careless on our Christian walks from time to time. We know that we are not allowing the Spirit to guide us when we permit other things that would take us down the wrong path fill our hearts. We are not making the best use of our time when walk unwisely and live a compromised life. Paul Anka wrote a song that was popularized by Frank Sinatra in 1969 called "My Way." It is the story of a man who sees the end near and reflects upon his life. If you take a look at the lyrics, the man, in his reflection, attributes all of his experiences as a result of having done it "My Way." How sad it would be for a person to live a life without God in it... When we live as if there is no God, we make foolish mistakes. A life that is richly lived yearns for the precious presence of the Holy Spirit deep within the heart... We must make a conscious decision to be filled with the Spirit so that we will have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control... If things aren't quite as satisfying in our lives as they should be, maybe its because we're trying to go it alone. There is a power source available to enrich our lives if we allow it to fill our hearts... A bit more about the heart tomorrow...

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

04/16/2015
The Fruit Of My Heart

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, --- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy ---- think about such things. What ever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me ---- put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you." (Phil.4:7-8).

Yesterday, I listed the the "fruit of the Spirit" from Gal.5:22-23 as virtues we ought to incorporate within our hearts. They are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control..." If these traits are not within our hearts, we haven't allowed the Holy Spirit to produce them.. To be quite honest, we've known this intellectually, but have not appropriated it into our hearts. Christ's death and resurrection have set us all free from the bondage of sin, so we have that power to actually be set free. We must ardently desire this. To get us on the right track, the apostle Paul has written the words found in today's verses. Our hearts are a part of our minds and in order for them to be receptive to what the Holy Spirit has to offer, they must be filled with the good stuff. Paul says to have our minds dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable... anything that is praiseworthy ---- think about such things! When our hearts and minds are programmed to dwell on these wonderful things, we become more receptive to how the Lord wants us to live our lives. We will walk the way we should and have that Amy Grant song coursing through us..."Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path... When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way, Still you're there right beside me. Nothing will I fear as long as You are near, Please be with me to the end....." Walking the way we ought to pleases the Lord and makes our lives happy ones... That's the way our hearts should be...

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

04/17/2015
Building Together

"And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit... to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Eph.4: 13).

Just 2 chapters before today's verses, the apostle Paul wrote this: "Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone..." (2;21). As parts of that great building, the Lord has blessed us with various talents. It is a humbling thought that the Master Builder would supply us with what is needed and give us a part in the establishment of

His kingdom. As amazing as that concept is, that's just exactly what He has done. He makes a generous offer of some paint and a brush, and invites us to join Him in His work... This is not only the spiritually inspired Paul's take on this, but Peter echoes the same stuff... "As you have come to Him, the Living Stone ---- rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him ---- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet.2:5). Peter identifies the task (to be built into a spiritual house) and a couple of chapters later discusses how God equips us for that task... "Each should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (4:10). God, as an act of grace, has bestowed these gifts upon us. Its not that we did something spectacular to earn the gift(s) or that we are particularly special, talented or even worthy... The great Master Builder is fully able to complete any project He has started on His own, but the paint and brush are offered to us anyway... The Lord wants us to have a sense of proprietorship in what He is building. We can experience that special pride that comes with "home ownership." I don't know about you, but I feel pretty honored and humbled by all of this...

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

04/18/2015

Some Challenging Questions

I hope you enjoy this morning's questions. As always, have fun....

- _____ 1. To what prophet did some youths say, "Go on up, you baldhead?" (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Ezra, (d) Obadiah.
- _____ 2. When God cast Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, He placed Cherubim at the _____ side. (a) north, (b) south, (c) east, (d) west.
- _____ 3. What king of Israel, son of Nimshu, drove his chariot like a madman? (a) Jehu, (b) Jehoram, (c) Ahaziah, (d) Ahab.
- _____ 4. What left-handed Benjamite judge killed King Eglon? (a) Othniel, (b) Shamgar, (c) Gideon, (d) Ehud.
- _____ 5. When Eglon was killed, the 18 inch dagger would not come out. Why? (a) It broke off, (b) it was too dull, (c) he was so fat.
- _____ 6. Which of these books were not written to Theophilus? (2 answers) (a) Luke, (b) 1 Thessalonians, (c) Galatians, (d) Acts.

- _____ 7. What Old Testament prophet had his lips touched with a live coal? (a) Isaiah, (b) Jeremiah, (c) Ezekiel, (d) Daniel.
- _____ 8. What person dreamed about a tree that reached to heaven? (a) Jacob, (b) Joseph, (c) Nebuchadnezzar, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 9. How many husbands did Jesus say the Samaritan woman at the well had? (a) 2, (b) 4, (c) 5, (d) 9. (e) he didn't say.
- _____ 10. When the Magi visited baby Jesus, where did they find Him? (a) in a manger, (b) in a house, (c) in an inn.

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

04/20/2015
That Confessing Thing

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge him before My Father in heaven.
But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven"
(Matt.10:32-33).

Most of us have come to understand at this point in our walk that confession and repentance are both integral parts in the steps that lead to salvation. The apostle Paul wrote; "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved" (Rom.10:10). As we zero in on confession in particular, we find that it encompasses a one time demand, but a long-time commitment... There just is no such thing as "secret discipleship..." To put it a bit more bluntly, secrecy will either overcome discipleship, or discipleship will overcome secrecy. When Paul said what he did in Rom.10:10, he made it clear that salvation and open confession are intricately linked. The one who wants to be saved must confess that Jesus is the Son of God and that God raised him from the dead. But this act that we call confession is really woven into the fabric of discipleship... In today's verses (Matt.10:32-33) Jesus makes it quite clear to His disciples, (and us) that His confessing of them before God required that they confess Him before men! (V 32) To emphasis the point, He states the same thing in the negative! (V 33). That is so powerful...Jesus lives among the people of the world through the confession that His believers constantly make of Him. Part of that confession may be in words, but the bulk of it entails the good works that we do in His name. Every time we perform an act of service for the Lord, we confess that He is the one who motivates us to do them. My advice? Lets all keep confessing....

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

04/21/2015

Is Confession Good For The Soul?

"But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Take hold to the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim.6:11-12).

You have probably heard the term that "confession is good for the soul..." It is not a biblical quote and from the limited research I did, I think it is an old Scottish one... In today's verses, Paul is admonishing his protege, Timothy, that he needed to recall the commitment he had made to the Lord. If you want to know what he was to flee from, you will have to read the previous verses of chapter six. Just a hint, they were about material ambitions... To remember his confession, was to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who made it before Pilate when asked whether or not He was a king... "You are right in saying that I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me" (Jn.18:37). The Christian life can sometimes be a struggle that requires one to "fight the good fight of faith." There is hardly a time when the world does not try to pull us back into its clutches. Paul urged Timothy and us that it is in faith that we deny the material ambitions that drive many people, and pursue righteousness and good living instead. We can follow Timothy's good confession of faith just as he followed Jesus'. I would contend that it is the source of a well-ordered life, but that it takes self-discipline... As we follow today's verses to their logical conclusion, we're reminded that both teacher and student are on their path to eternal life. By keeping the commandments of the One we have confessed, we each hope to be "unspotted and blameless until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Hmmmmmm... Maybe confession is good for the soul...

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:1

04/22/2015

What God Wants Of Us

"What must we do to do the work God requires?" "The work of God is this: to believe in the one He has sent" (Jn.6:28 & 29).

Our confession is an open and public declaration of faith, predicated on the "good confession" made by Jesus before Pilate, and the one made by Timothy before many witnesses... Today's verses ask and answer a question. Also required is an oral declaration of faith through

confession and a determined commitment to obey God. Not for Jesus, but for Timothy and others, (us) confession along with repentance calls for turning away from sin and turning toward God. Like every other nook and cranny of Christ-like living, confession and repentance grow from belief, faith and trust. Faith is very interesting, because it is more simple and more complicated than folks often suppose. To believe in Jesus is one thing, and it entails believing the testimony of firsthand witnesses. It is deeply embedded in a firm faith and obedience. In today's verses, Jesus tells His followers that they did something pleasing to God when they believed in Him... Faith is something that begins and ends with people who make the decision that Jesus is the Christ. That decision is followed up by loving, trusting and obeying His will... The way I see it, repentance, confession, baptism and godly living are the basic ingredients of our faith. This is what Jesus and the apostles taught, and its good enough for me...

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

04/23/2015
The Skill-Set

"But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Col.3:14).

Today's verse is kind of a teaser. To get what "all these things" are, one has to go back to the beginning of the chapter. It is actually worth the read, and would be something beneficial to meditate upon today. Certain occupations, recreational activities or interests require what is called a "skill-set." If you're interested in astronomy, a knowledge of the heavens is required, not to mention a good telescope and the ability to use it. This skill-set won't help you to be a professional baseball player, an excellent musician or solver of math problems. Each of these endeavors requires its own special set of skills, and maybe an instructor to help you along.. Being a good Christian requires no skill set that can be learned from a few lessons with a good coach. Our Bibles are replete with guidelines that help us to be good Christians. If we take the challenge, and read the thirteen verses preceding today's, we will get an instruction manual of "do's and don'ts..." If that's not enough, there are verses that talk about our attitudes. There are scriptures that let us not only know what to do, but how and why. The marvelous thing is this: The only special skill-set required is a willingness to get better. Want to be a better citizen? Its in there! Want to be a better neighbor? You'll find out how... Want to be a better husband or wife? Its there... Want to be a better friend? Ditto! We need no special coordination skills, musical knowledge, or math prowess. The changes one makes when he or she becomes a Christian are blended into the total character of a person... And when we get better.... That's a special skill-set...

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

04/24/2015
Right Reason / Wrong Reason

"Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he ruled in Jerusalem for twenty-nine years.... He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly" (2 Chron.25:1-2).

Doing the work of the Lord requires one very important aspect... A pure heart... Amaziah was the king of Judah for some twenty-nine years, and if we take a look at today's verses, it might seem as though he did some pretty good stuff... Amaziah did what was right in the sight of the Lord. If we stopped there, we wouldn't have a devotional topic this morning. He did the right things, but not wholeheartedly. If you are curious, you can read a bit farther into the chapter to see his lack of wholeheartedness... Jesus' attitude about this is reflected in Matt.6:1, 5, & 6. He spoke of being careful about doing acts of righteousness before men to be seen by them. He also spoke about praying. The hypocrites loved to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men... The key aspect in both cases did not involve what they did, but how and why they did. Make no mistake, Jesus wants us to do good things, but He wants them to come from a pure heart. About the giving and the praying He tells us to keep on doing them, but for the right reasons. Our motives must come from a pure heart. This means that the church, and more appropriately, we as believers, need to examine our lives. The words of the apostle Paul should put the final touch on the purity of our hearts regarding the stuff we do... "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal.1:10). As we continue our Christian walk today, I hope this gives us good food for thought...

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

04/25/2015
A Few Good Questions

It's Saturday, so that means it's time to strain your brain and answer a few Bible questions. As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. Who caused bricklayers to go on strike? (a) Paul, (b) Moses, (c) Jesse, (d) David.
- _____ 2. What Bible character turned dust into gnats? (a) Aaron, (b) Moses, (c) Elijah, (d) Elisha.
- _____ 3. Who was the man to first organize an orchestra in the Bible? (a) Moses, (b) Caleb, (c) David, (d) Clydeous.

- _____ 4. Which is the only book in the Bible in which God is not mentioned? (a) Hosea, (b) Obadiah, (c) Micah, (d) Esther.
- _____ 5. A lost ax head was made to float by whom? (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Isaiah, (d) Peter.
- _____ 6. To escape a queen, who walked for 40 days and nights without food? (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) David, (c) Moses.
- _____ 7. Who paid for the nursing of baby Moses? (a) his mom, (b) his dad, (c) pharaoh's daughter, (d) it was free.
- _____ 8. Who took his own life with his sword? (a) Hezekiah, (b) Ahab, (c) Saul, (d) Azariah.
- _____ 9. What king pouted because he couldn't buy someone's vineyard? (a) Saul, (b) Ahab, (c) David, (d) Naboth.
- _____ 10. Solomon actually had another name given to him at birth. What was it? (a) Elimelech, (b) Mordecai, (c) Jedidiah, (d) he didn't have one.

I hope you all have a great weekend and a glorifying and uplifting day of worship on His Day...
Love mark Phil.4:11

04/27/2015
Setting The Bar

"Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did" (1 Jn.2:6).

My title this morning dovetails just right into the above verse. Both are short and concise, and in a nutshell, they tell us that to lead a good and productive life, "setting the bar" is important. It means that we should have a standard which is the source of the things we do. The apostle John, in a few well chosen words gives us the standard... Jesus set the bar for us and has become our standard. If we claim to be his follower in our life, we must walk as He did. Peter took this a bit farther by saying: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet.2:21). Scripture clearly lets us know that Jesus has set the bar, and that we are to follow that example on our walk. Without exception, not only did He do the right things, but He did them for the right reasons. The evidence of the fact that He was setting the bar is reflected in His own words... "In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt.5:16). When we are walking as Jesus did, the things we say and do are a

reflection of His life. There is even something extra that I must add to this. When we are following Jesus' example, we get to set the bar for others by our very actions. We get to share the gospel message through doing the right things for the right reasons.... Jesus not only set the bar, but He set it perfectly...

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

04/28/2015
Its All About His Glory

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve Him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever" (1 Chron.28:9).

If we are going to do anything for God, His presence has to be real and fresh in our daily life. In today's verse, King David gives some advice to his son Solomon. Now I know that the advice is in relationship to the building of the Temple, but the advice goes even farther than that. David wants Solomon to serve Him with wholehearted devotion and a willing mind.... God wants us to walk in His Word, so he can fulfill His purpose in us. This calls for us to submit ourselves totally and completely to God by doing His will... Why? For no other reason than because it is His will... It is then that our life will become a special tool that He can use to change other's lives and to make a difference in the world for the kingdom of God. When we walk as Jesus wants us to walk, we are not only a tool but a vessel that will be fit for The Master's use... If we live our lives this way, it brings glory to Him. Through us, His glory can be used to change the lives of folks who are hurting for a Savior. David told Solomon that there was a reason for the wholehearted devotion and willing mind... It revolves around the fact that God knows every motive, even those in our hearts. He is waiting to be found, but if we forsake, rejection follows... As I complete this small series on doing the right thing, here's the conclusion.. We must do the right thing; We must do it for the right reason... that God will be glorified, through Jesus Christ, in our lives...

Have a wonderful day... Do Good... Give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

04/29/2015
Our Flexing God

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men" (1 Cor.12:4-6).

Both as individuals and congregations, we will frequently come up against obstacles that seem to be beyond our abilities to cope with. Maybe its time to meditate upon a very important aspect of being God's people.... We have a flexing God... What an awesome thought it is to know that God is there and that He is powerful. I know that I cannot capsule it any better than the apostle Paul did with these famous words... "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil.4:13). We must constantly pinch ourselves in reminder that God has an inexhaustible supply of everything we need to live a life of joy and productivity... Fears about our lives, health, temptations, material stuff or anxiety are all best handled when we include God's great strength in our plans. God cares and He will help us... He will help us to accomplish things that we might think are beyond our scope. God even knows how we feel, and His might needs to be relied upon. God's strength shines through the brightest during our times of greatest need and apparent weakness. As we all go through our day today, lets remember that God is ready and willing to flex for us. That flexion includes the power to help us to not only get through the day, but to thrive in it... "The Lord is my strength and my shield; and my heart trusts in Him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song" (Psa.28:7).

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

04/30/2015
Parting The Sea

"You are my strength when I am weak, You are the Treasure that I seek, You are my All in All. Seeking You as a Precious jewel, Lord, to give up I'd be a fool, You are my All in All. Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is Your name. Jesus Lamb of God, Worthy is Your name."

You Are My All In All... Words by Dennis Jernigan 1990

When the Israelites were their most vulnerable, God parted the Red Sea. When they were hungry, He sent them food from above in the form of manna... When the apostle Paul had his problems, Jesus told him this: "My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness..." Then Paul wrote this to us: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly in my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties...For when I am weak, then I am strong..." (2 Cor.12:9-10). God leaves us with certain immutable facts that we must incorporate and make a part of our spiritual DNA. Number one... God is stronger than we are. Just because a problem seems big, that doesn't mean that God can't do anything about it... Two.. God helps us when we stand up for what is right. Instead of doing wrong because some think it is acceptable, we must think of what God would have us do. Three... We should never be ashamed of God and of being a believer. The lesson that Peter gave us in his denial of Jesus ought to help, as we look at who he became... Four... We must trust that God will always

see what we truly need... That's what the word sufficient means in the above scripture. Finally, when we have God with us, we don't ever have to be afraid. As our relationship with God grows, our fears will diminish... When our faith wavers just a tiny bit, its good to picture those Israelite people walking through the parted sea...

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