

02/01/2016  
Being Like A Soldier

"Endure hardship with us as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs --- he wants to please his commanding officer" (2 Tim.2:3-4).

We hold the members of the armed forces of this country with high esteem. The first disciples of Christ lived in the Roman Empire and would have been quite familiar with the dress and duty of the Roman soldiers. After all, they were the most formidable army that existed in the world at the time. So when the apostle Paul makes the reference to a soldier in today's verses, he was using an illustration the people were perhaps all too knowing of...In this week's lessons, we'll explore some of the things that we can learn about being a good disciple of Jesus from the perspective of a soldier. Jesus has enlisted us as soldiers, and we must please Him with our service as he is the captain of our salvation... To take this concept one step farther, He gives us orders to follow. "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say" (Lk.6:46). Here's the really cool part though... He does not send us into battle, but leads us. "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt.16:24). He is always ready to stand by our side to help us in the fight. "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted" (Heb.2:18). The existence of an army implies the possibility of an enemy. The Bible warns us of our adversary, and it is not flesh and blood. (Eph.6:12). We must remember that Satan is our strong, guileful, and evil adversary. He is ready to devour our souls, and he does not fight fair. Many armies have fallen because they underestimated their enemies. This week, we'll look at how we must be prepared...

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

02/02/2016  
We've Got Weaponry

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.... Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand" (Eph.6:10 & 13).

We are fortunate that the Lord has not left us alone and defenseless against a formidable enemy. In Ephesians 6:13-18, the apostle Paul explains to us about the "full armor" of God that we may use to persevere against evil. Its always a good read, and an even better meditation... The belt of truth is what holds everything together for a disciple of Christ, as the scriptures give us the stability to help fight our battles. The purpose of the breastplate was to protect the soldier's heart and other vital organs. We have the breastplate of righteousness in place which is the holiness, goodness, and integrity we need to fill our hearts with... We are fitted with shoes

of preparation and carry a shield of faith.. The shoes are to be used to spread, defend, and teach the gospel, while the shield will repel the attacks of temptation. We can certainly see the importance of protecting the head, so we wear a helmet of salvation... We want our heads protected so that we can hold them up high in our defense. Finally, the soldier's most important weapon was his sword, so we carry the sword of the Spirit, our only offensive piece of equipment. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb.4:12). All of these weapons have one thing in common --- they all come from the word of God. God has not left us defenseless. We have his word! Lets all get armored up...

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

02/03/2016

"Soldiers of Christ arise, And put you armor on; Strong in the strength which God supplies,  
Through His beloved Son.  
Strong in the Lord of Hosts, And with His mighty power; Who in the strength which of Jesus  
trusts, Through His Beloved Son.  
Stand then in His great might, With all His strength endued; But take to arm you for the fight,  
The panoply of God."

From the song; "Soldiers Of Christ Arise" Words by Charles Wesley 1747

Whether it was in the first century or today, soldiers have to go through training to be their best.

Today its call "boot camp" or "basic training" in which someone gets his start becoming a soldier. If a perspective soldier cannot make it through basic training, he cannot serve as one.

Exercise and drills are a part of a soldier's life, so that he may stay in the physical condition necessary to serve at an optimum. If the Word of God is our weapon and armor, we have to learn to use it. Basic training is only the beginning of a Christian soldier's life. Given time, every disciple is expected to become experienced and skilled in the Word of God..."In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food. Anyone living on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish between good and evil"

(Heb.5:12-14). The training we must undergo takes place as we read and meditate on God's Word. That is the main part of our development and training... There are also many valuable opportunities to develop and train, as we become involved in Worship and Bible classes. Just as in regular physical training, it takes time to train ourselves in the Word of the Lord... There are no shortcuts... We can't let ourselves get too caught up in the affairs of this world to the point that we sacrifice our training. If we are too busy to train, then we are just too busy...

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

02/04/2016  
Its A Daily Fight

"Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim.6:12).

Soldiers were not enlisted, trained, and equipped to sit around all day and do nothing. When the order is given, a soldier must be ready to fight. There are a number of words used to express the duties of an active soldier of Christ. Today's verse says that we need to fight the good fight of faith. When the full armor of God is mentioned in Eph.6, the sword of the Spirit does not come with a scabbard. It must be drawn and ready to use..."For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world...." (Eph.6:12). While some warfare is done at a distance, wrestling denotes hand-to-hand combat. Spiritual warfare is sometimes a messy struggle which demands our personal involvement to engage and overpower the enemy. "Resist him, standing firm in the faith..." (1 Pet.5:9). In our spiritual battle, we must never surrender, or even negotiate a peace, because Satan is the enemy. The armor does not protect the back, so we must stand and fight. Finally, we must remember that the fight won't always be easy. A soldier of Christ must be prepared to endure some hardships like resisting temptations, moments of doubt, standing for the truth when it may not be popular, and always contending for the faith. We may even have to deal with those that desert the faith. Its a daily fight, and we must be ready to participate...

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

02/05/2016  
The Battleground

"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, we have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor.10:3-5).

Our battleground as Christians is not a physical one that is fought at a physical location. As we see from today's verses, it is a spiritual battle that is fought in the hearts and minds of people. It is fought in our own hearts when we are tempted to sin. Like Jesus did in Matthew 4:1-11 when tempted by Satan, we must use the Word of God as our primary defense. "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (Rom.13:14). We must take the proper precaution to safeguard ourselves against

temptation. A great way to resist temptations is to fill our hearts with "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" (Phil.4:8). Today's verse also tells us that we have divine power to demolish strongholds... It says that we can do this through the presentation of the truth found in God's Word. Jesus is our leader and we must please Him with our service. While there are many blessings found in being a disciple, we cannot afford to ignore the reality that there is also a powerful enemy out there, wanting to devour our soul. We have everything we need to win the battle if we study and lean upon the Lord in prayer. Then we can stand victorious in our Lord Jesus Christ...

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

02/06/2016  
A Quiz About Prophets

Today's quiz will test your knowledge about prophets. Get on your thinking caps, and as always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. This bald prophet was a performer of many miracles and succeeded another great prophet. (a) Nehemiah, (b) Elisha, (c) Hosea, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. This court prophet confronted King David with his adultery. (a) Nathan, (b) Samuel, (c) Elisha, (d) Ezra.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. This young prophet had a vision of a statue composed of different metals. (a) Shadrach, (b) Daniel, (c) Meshach, (d) Baasha.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. This King of Israel was, early in his career, associated with a group of prophets. (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hezekiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. This prophet, famous for his vision of dry bones, was with the exiles of Babylon. (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Ezekiel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. This prophet's work is quoted more in the NT than any other's. (a) Hosea, (b) Micah, (c) Jeremiah, (d) Isaiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. This Christian prophet prophesied a famine in the land. (a) Agabus, (b) John the Baptist, (c) Anna, (d) Rubiceous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. This woman was sent for when the long-neglected Book of Law was found during Josiah's reign. (a) Miriam, (b) Deborah, (c) Huldah, (d) Noadiah.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. The four (4) daughters of this Christian evangelist, were considered Prophetesses. (a) Silas, (b) Barnabas, (c) Philip, (d) John Mark.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. This elderly woman recognized the infant Jesus as being the Messiah. (a) Elisabeth, (b) Anna, (c) Naomi, (d) Tabitha.

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

02/08/2016  
An Athlete - A Life Of Commitment

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize..." (1 Cor.9:24).

One of the things that is sorely lacking in people's spiritual life today is commitment. People just don't seem to stick with things and see them through to the end as they once did. Maybe there are just too many distractions out there that draw them away... If one is to be a true disciple of Christ, this kind of attitude simply doesn't work. Jesus is very succinct in His requirement of commitment from those are to be called His disciples. He was always up front with folks in telling them the cost of discipleship, and demanding that they count that cost before committing themselves to Him... "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Lk.9:62). Once we commit ourselves to the Lord, there is no turning back. It is against this backdrop that we will use the life of an athlete to see what commitment is really all about. You might want to read today's verse through to the end of the chapter to get the flavor of what this week's devotionals will be all about. Meditation on this would be good... There are more reference to sports in the Bible than this one, as you might want to read Hebrews 12:1-2... When the games were founded in ancient Greece, contestants were trained under very strict rules and supervision. They were expected to train for at least 10 months before the games, resided at one place, and followed a strict diet. By the first century, these games were still popular in Rome and drew great crowds of people... Because of their popularity, the apostle Paul was able to make good use of the games as illustrations throughout his epistles. The athlete provided an excellent example of the type of commitment Jesus requires from His disciples. We will look at that this week....

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

02/09/2016  
Committed To Rigorous Training

"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable" NASB Version. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever" NIV Version. "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible" KJ Version. (1 Cor.9:25).

I threw three (3) versions of the same verse at you this morning, and I find their subtle differences interesting. If an athlete was going to win a crown, he knew that he had to commit himself to rigorous training over an extended period of time. He knew that the other competitors were doing the same thing, and that he would compete with other skilled and highly trained athletes. The apostle Paul makes some allusions to this type of training in all three versions of 1 Cor.9:25... The KJV uses the word temperate which means self-restraint. An athlete would have to abstain from all things that would hinder his ability to compete at the highest level. By the way, the original 1611 KJV translates vs. 25 this way; "He who strives in the games exercises self-control in all things..." When I was a student at Harding, I looked at that verse on the gymnasium wall every day. I think we get the metaphor of the athlete/Christian... A dedicated disciple must be in control of himself in order to be fully equipped to serve Christ... Sometimes we may get the impression that men like Paul were so spiritually gifted that they didn't have to worry about the temptations that we are faced with daily... WRONG! Paul wrote this to remind us of his weaknesses; "but I beat my body daily and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (V 27). What a wonderful lesson for us... He didn't literally "beat his body," and bring physical harm to it, but rather, he brought his passions into complete subjection. He was willing to do what it took to render total obedience to Christ. Paul gave us the ultimate teaching... We can never take our eyes off the prize. How is our training coming along? We'll look at a few more aspects of it tomorrow....

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

02/10/2016  
Exercise And Rule Keeping

"And exercise yourself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life, and for the life to come" (1 Tim.4:7-8).

In today's verse, the apostle Paul is telling Timothy to exercise himself unto godliness... He is telling us to do the very same thing... The word "exercise" is translated from the Greek word *gumnazo*, from which we get the English word *gymnastic*. With this word, Timothy would have instantly thought of the exercises that prepared an athlete for competition in the games. Paul is telling Timothy, and us, to stop wasting time with worthless stuff and "get back to the gym!" Godliness is a special humility or devotion one must have to be a dedicated follower of Christ. Just as an athlete is committed to his workout routine, disciples are to be committed to prayer, Bible study, and meditation. To the Greeks, in order to enter the games, the athlete had to prove that he was of pure Greek blood... He also had to prove that he did not forfeit his right to compete through misconduct, and had undergone the proper training. Those were a part of the rules, and in the same way, one can only be a disciple of Christ unless they meet certain requirements set forth by the Lord... "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters --- yes, even his own life --- he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple" (Lk.14:26-27). Once in the games the athlete had to compete according to the rules and regulations that had been established. If an athlete broke the rules, he was not only denied the crown, but was sometimes even disgraced and punished. (google Ben Johnson... 1984 Olympic Games). Paul even knew that he himself could become disqualified, and took great pains to make sure he did not lose his right to the crown. (1 Cor.9:27). We must strive mightily and fairly in order to win the crown. Are you winning?

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

02/11/2016  
Playing To Win

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us" (Heb.12:1 NIV)

An athlete doesn't win simply because he has trained hard and competed by the rules. It is not enough to simply "be in the game..." He has to run to win! I don't think I ever played in an athletic competition in which I didn't strive to win, and have expectation of winning... The attitude with which an athlete competes is extremely important. An attitude that expresses, "I've done just good enough to get by," won't cut it. The victory goes to those who compete to win. Today's verse from the Book of Hebrews expresses an athlete's determination to win. Swimmers, runners, and bikers all wear lightweight clothing as they throw off everything that hinders. The

NASB says every encumbrance, and the KJV says to lay aside every weight...Swimmers may actually shave their bodies before important competitions. A disciple of Christ must also throw aside everything that might hinder him from following Christ. These weights or encumbrances in a believer's life would obviously include sinful activities, but there might be more. Sometimes, seemingly innocent things can become a distraction that weighs us down and keeps us from serving Christ to the best of our ability. . If our true goal and desire is to follow Jesus, we should be willing to lay aside anything that weighs us down.... Finally, the writer suggests that we run with perseverance (endurance, patience). The disciple's race is a life-long one in which we must keep running until we reach our goal. Lets all have a great run....

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

02/12/2016  
The Real Prize

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

Our service to Christ is like a great race to glory, and we should desire to be the first across the finish line. The apostle Paul goes on to describe the intensity of his training... "Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly..." (1 Cor.9:26a). Paul knew what he wanted and was absolutely determined to get it. He was not going to allow himself to get distracted by anything that this life could entangle him with. He looked toward Jesus, set his mind on the things above, and pressed on toward the goal to win the prize... We look at today's verses and see him straining for what lies ahead. Are you and I straining that hard? I purposefully left out the second part of 1 Cor.9:26. "I do not box like a man who beats the air" (1 Cor.9:26b). In a boxing match, a missed blow does two bad things. It wastes energy, and exposes one's own body to the enemy. In life, when we get involved in things that distract us from the prize, it does the same two negative things... Paul never wasted opportunities. He was deliberate and purposeful in his service to the Lord. In his teachings and examples of alluding to the world of athletics, he implores us to have that same determination and commitment in our discipleship to Christ. Carrying the teaching to its logical end, we are to exercise ourselves toward godliness, remove every hindrance, and run with endurance. Only those who have the commitment of an athlete will win the imperishable crown. Lets all keep on running....

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

02/13/2016  
Some Notable Women



Today's quiz has to do with women in the Bible, some famous, and some a little more obscure.  
As always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Whose daughters became the mothers of the Moabites and Ammonites? (a) Hagar's, (b) Leah's, (c) Lot's, (d) Ham's
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What priest of Midian had seven daughters, one of which became the wife of Moses? (a) Reuel (Jethro), (b) Hanoah, (c) Libni, (d) Mahli.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What was the name of Melchizedek's mother? (a) Rubeous, (b) Zicri, (c) Elzaphan, (d) he didn't have one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What little girl did Jesus refer to as Talitha? (a) Jarius' daughter, (b) Peter's daughter, (c) Mary, (d) Judith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What harlot fled from a burning city, taking her family with her? (a) Gomer, (b) Rahab, (c) Magda, (d) Clarice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What commander had an Israelite servant girl tell him about a cure for leprosy? (a) Ben-Hadad, (b) Naaman, (c) Joab, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who urged her husband to curse God and die? (a) Gomer, (b) Lot's wife, (c) Job's wife, (d) Jezebel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What apostle had a sister who informed soldiers of a murderous plot? (a) Peter, (b) James, (c) John, (d) Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Whose mom took refuge in Moab while her son was fleeing the wrath of Israel's king? (a) David's, (b) Hezekiah's, (c) Joash's, (d) Michal's
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What was the profession of the 2 women who disputed over a child and asked Solomon for a decision? (a) prophetesses, (b) seamstresses, (c) harlots, (d) it doesn't say.

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

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Matt.5:13).

As Jesus concludes a part of His great list of blessings that we have come to know as The Beatitudes, he reveals some important things to His twelve original disciples and us... He explains that there is the probability that His disciples would be reviled or even persecuted, and then something more positive that is shown in today's verse. As a matter of fact, we will take a close look at Matt.5:13-16 this week. He speaks of the positive influence that His disciples are to have on the world as both salt and light... If you have been involved with the church for very long, you are bound to have heard a sermon or two about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. In my preaching, I've used these examples many times. Since we're dealing with our responsibilities as disciples, I'll take a slightly different approach. I'm going to speak specifically about a disciple's influence or power that they have to affect others... All of us may not have the same kind or amount of influence (good or bad) on others, but we all have influence... In being a positive influence on others, we are able to emulate Jesus, the greatest man that ever lived. "How God appointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how He went about doing good..." (Acts10:38). He was criticized for hanging out with the wrong people, (sinners) but these folks saw His love and concern, and heard His invitation to come and find rest. Many of them responded... Their homes, like ours today, had salt and some source of light in them. It is against this backdrop that this week's devotionals are going come. I hope they are beneficial to all of us...

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

02/16/2016  
Being Salty

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone" (Col.4:6).

Jesus always intended for His disciples to have an important, though often underappreciated relationship with the world. Salt has always had a great amount of uses, so lets see how a couple of them apply to being a disciple of Christ. Most Biblical scholars believe that the primary lesson Jesus intended with His use of salt was its ability as a preservative. Before refrigeration, salt was rubbed into meat to preserve it, and the process is still used today. A disciple of Christ is supposed to exhibit those same preserving influences on the world today... When we actively follow Jesus in doing what is right and vigorously opposing evil, we are helping to stem the moral decay in our society. In Old Testament days, Israel often suffered the chastisement of God when they were immoral. The city of Sodom would have been saved for the sake of ten (10) righteous people, and Judah was spared during the days of good king Josiah... Jeremiah

5:1 tells us that Jerusalem would have been pardoned if just one man could have been found who executed justice and sought for truth. We all know that salt also gives food flavor. Likewise, our influence on the world should stand out because we are distinctively and morally different....

Followers of Christ are to provide a pleasing flavor to the harshness of life. We are to be the ones that are to lighten the burdens of others, (Gal.6:1) provide comfort, (2 Cor.1:3-6) and weep and rejoice with those that weep and rejoice... (Rom.12:15) Today's verse says that even our speech should be always full of grace and seasoned with salt... In a very positive way, are each of us being salty enough?

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

02/17/2016  
All About The Light

"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 Jn.1:5).

Light is a very important symbol that is used over and over again in the Bible. When Jesus entered the world, He is spoken of as bringing light to mankind..."In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it" (Jn.1:4-5). Light is always associated with truth and understanding, while darkness is equated with ignorance and the power of Satan. As followers of Jesus, we are much like the moon compared to God being the sun. We're told that we are to be the light of the world, but it is actually the light that is reflected from the sun..."For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Eph.5:8). Lets look at some of the properties of light that make it such a valuable commodity... Light is that which reveals and illuminates. It reveals what is concealed by darkness. God's Word will reveal the truth to a world that is lost in darkness. Light drives away darkness and gives guidance, just as the sunrise causes the darkness of night to disappear. Light and darkness cannot coexist and sin and righteousness cannot either...Light is needed to see in the darkness, and here in NJ we have many lighthouses along the shoreline that guided sailors in times past. Light warms and comforts and draws those who want to come out of the darkness..."Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun.." (Ecc.11:7). Disciples are to live in such a way that their light can bring others comfort, kindness and warmth... Jesus said (Jn.3:19-21) that while those who practice evil are repelled by the light, those who are guided by the truth are drawn to it. If we are the lights that we ought to be, souls that need saving will be attracted to us because they are looking for something they desperately need... An old country song says this; "You can't be a beacon if your light don't shine...." Lets stay shiny...

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

02/18/2016

### Maintaining Our Influence By Being The Salt

"But if the salt becomes tasteless, how can it be made salty again?" (Matt.5:13a) "For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men" (2 Cor.8:21).

Because being salt is referring to our influence in the world, Jesus' words indicate the possibility of losing that saltiness... What this is saying to you and I is that if we allow contamination of some kind to affect us, as disciples we can have our influence greatly diminished. A disciple must maintain his or her distinctiveness as a follower of Jesus at all costs! As a disciple, we represent Jesus in just about every way possible. We should reflect His Word, His work, His church, and His Father to the world... The responsibility is great in that what we say and do is representative of the world's view of Jesus. If we lose our saltiness, it is a validation of the world's skepticism and unbelief... The second of today's verses (2 Cor.8:21) lets us know that a Christian must "practice what they preach..." The hypocrite has no positive influence upon anyone. "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? (2 Cor.6:14). Our influence can go down the drain if we compromise with sin and error. The Christian who compromises his or her faith, has blended in with the world and can no longer be taken seriously. The really dangerous thing is this; Some disciples lose their influence to the extent that they become more harmful to the cause of Christ than helpful... About losing one's saltiness, Jesus said this; "It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and be trampled by men..." (Matt.5:13b). As we run life's race, let's be sure that our salt maintains its flavor the whole way...

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

02/19/2016

### The Influence Of Light

"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars (lights) in the universe" (Phil.2:15)

Jesus said; "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light an lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good deeds, and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt.5:14-16). Everything about today's

devotional is wrapped up in those wonderful words of our Lord. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. We are to be that city... The light of our influence must be visible and unmistakable to those around us. We are to be that unmistakable light... It is foolish for one to go through the trouble of lighting a lamp only to hide it under a basket. We can't hide our light under that basket... A lamp must be positioned so that it benefits all that are in the house. We are to illuminate those, both in the house and out of it with God's truth... Our light is to shine before men so that they might see our good works and glorify God. It might be important to notice here that the world is to see the works and not the worker... The captain steering a ship at night saw the light and not the lighthouse. God gets the credit for our good influence, not us... Today's verse lets us know that there are things we might do that would tarnish our ability to be the lights we ought to be. Doing those good things without complaining or arguing, so that we may be blameless and pure children of God will keep the tarnish off and allow the distinctiveness of our good character and integrity shine through... Let's all strive to be the children of light that the Lord has scattered through a sinful world, so that He will be glorified...

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

02/20/2016  
Late Night Callers

This week's quiz is about stuff that happened late at night in the Bible... As always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Who came to Peter late at night and released him from prison? (a) Herod, (b) Rhoda, (c) an angel, (d) John Mark.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who had a late-night visit from an angel assuring him that he would be safe aboard a storm-tossed ship? (a) Jonah, (b) Paul, (c) Hiram, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who led some officers of the chief priest to pay a late night call on Jesus? (a) Caiaphas, (b) Annas, (c) Judas, (d) Malchus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What Pharisee called on Jesus late at night? (a) Joseph, (b) Nicodemus, (c) Saul, (d) it doesn't name him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who met a man with whom he engaged in an all-night wrestling match? (a) Naphtali, (b) Jacob, (c) Samson, (d) Rachel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Near what town did shepherds receive angels as late night visitors? (a) Nazareth, (b) Bethany, (c) Capernaum, (d) Bethlehem.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who took Saul's spear after sneaking into his camp late one night? (a) Joab, (b) David, (c) an angel, (d) it didn't say.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who attacked a Midianite camp late at night? (a) Samson, (b) David, (c) Gideon, (d) Micah.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who paid young Samuel a late-night visit? (a) Eli, (b) Elkanah, (c) the Lord, (d) his mom.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. What Old Testament king met with a medium late at night? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Jehoshaphat.

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

02/22/2016

Goin' Fishin'

"As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Peter and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' So they left their nets and followed him" (Mk.1:16-18).

There were a lot of people that followed Jesus in the short time that he was upon the earth.

From all of these followers, he chose twelve (12) men to become his special disciples or apostles... The two men mentioned in today's verses, Peter and Andrew, were fishermen. Jesus approached them just as they were casting their nets into the sea, and said these prophetic words; "Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men..." They dropped their nets and immediately followed him. Jesus often related his message to people in terms that they could understand. He called Peter and Andrew, along with two other fishermen, James and John, to a spiritual work, using a language they would understand. As fish are caught out of the water, lost souls are caught out of the sea of sin and sorrow, evil and error, guilt and greed, darkness and death. Fish were caught with a net while lost souls are "caught" with the gospel. They are not caught with gimmicks, food and fun, pop psychology, feel-good stories, or bait and switch (pardon the pun) tactics... Fishermen must know how to use the net in order to catch fish, while "fishers of men" must learn to reach folks with the gospel. Peter and Andrew knew the trade of catching fish, because they did it as a profession... "For he and all of his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men...' (Lk.5:9-10). Jesus would now teach these men the work of catching men... "They preached the good news in that city and won a large number of disciples" (Acts 14:21). One of the responsibilities of disciples is to make more disciples... Why should we be fishers of men?

Why should disciples of Christ be concerned about making more disciples? What is our motivation? This week's devotionals will be dedicated to this topic. I hope all of us will learn a few things...

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

02/23/2016

Why Fish?

"For the Son of man came to seek and save what was lost" (Lk.19:10).

For those of us who enjoy fishing, there is something special about it that isn't always easy to explain. My dad took me fishing when I was a teenager, and some of our better times together were spent out in a boat fishing with each other. My sister Frannie also loved to fish, and some of our best times together were also out there fishing with each other. Following someone or something we love is an important reason to keep doing it, and the "fishing for men" that Jesus talked about to Peter and Andrew was just that. Today's verse is Jesus talking about himself.

For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost is a fishing statement. First and foremost, as disciples of Jesus, we are to follow his examples and teachings. If we are truly following in Jesus' footsteps, we will be found where he was found, doing the important work that he was doing. Simply put, it's what a follower does... Secondly, when Jesus called Peter and Andrew and said follow me and I will make you fishers of men, he did it with a purpose. When they became fishers of men, they were fulfilling the purpose of their calling and training. Disciples are to be made, and it is the Lord's will and design for his kingdom that disciples make more disciples... "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." (Matt.28:19). There are many people out there that are longing for a greater sense of that purpose in their lives. The true disciple of Christ has no greater purpose than to be involved in his Master's work, especially that of saving the lost. Let's go fishing...

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

02/24/2016

Our Fishing Pleases The Lord

"So we make it our goal to please Him...." (2 Cor.5:9) "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt.16:24).

As we walk through life, there is a big question that we must ask ourselves... As a disciple of Christ, who am I trying to please? If we answer "me," we've got it all wrong. The two verses I have used today make who we are trying to please crystal clear... We are not trying to please ourselves because we are to deny ourselves. We are not trying to please the world, because 1 Jn.2:15 lets us know that we are not any longer of this world... Our daily walk ought to be worthy of our Master, trying to please Him by being fruitful in every good deed. "We speak as men

approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts" (1 Thess.2:4). God is pleased when we are doing the important work of fishing for souls... A second reason for our fishing is all about compassion. "When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He then said to His disciples, (that's us) 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send our workers into His harvest field' (Matt.9:36-37). As followers of Jesus, we are to look upon the lost just as He did... We are to look at them with compassion, ready to be fishers of men... There is surely a need for those who have the truth to share it with those who do not... We just cannot ignore the fact that many are swimming in the sea of despair, and the Lord has entrusted us with bringing them in. I keep remembering the words of Isaiah, when the Lord was looking for someone to take His message to the people... His response? "Here I am. Send me?" (6:8). Jesus constantly lets us know that its up to us to do the fishing...

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

02/25/2016

Because Its The Right Thing To Do

"Then they said to one another, 'We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let us go at once and tell it to the royal palace'" (2 Kings 7:9).

In 2 Kings7:3-9, four lepers wandered into the deserted camp of the Syrians and found their "salvation..." These leprous men were dying outside the gates of the city, and could not enter it because of their disease. Instead of sitting and waiting to starve to death, they decided to surrender to the enemy. To their surprise they found the camp deserted of people, but not of food, drink and treasure. They actually had their "salvation," but after eating and drinking and then getting ready to carry off as much of the treasure as they could, a moment of clarity set in.

In the midst of their physical joy, they remembered that others needed to hear about this discovery they had made. They realized that the right thing to do was to share the "good news" with others in the same plight that they had been in... I'm not sure that this story was really designed to teach us about being "fishers of men," but it works... Those who have had their sins forgiven know how precious the gift is. David, the Psalmist, says this; "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit there is no deceit" (Psa.32:1-2). Forgiveness and salvation are blessed gifts. They are such blessed gifts that they must be shared with others, and the Lord has put this in our hands. "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one in whom they have not heard of? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? (Rom.10:14-15). People who have have heard the good news and know of the gift are obligated to let others know that it is available to them too.... Why? Because its the right thing to do...



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

02/26/2016

### Fishing... A Duty In The Joy Of Winning Souls

"So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (Lk.17:10). "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me" (Ezek.33:7).

Disciples of the Lord have duties... One of those important duties is to make other disciples. The verse I used today from the book of Ezekiel, describes him as a watchman for the house of Israel. A watchman has been given a duty . Ezekiel was given that duty, and even if people ignored the warning(s), it was still his duty to sound them. Here's something that is also important... If the watchman failed to sound the warning, the blood of the people was on his head. Today, those who are lost in sin are in danger of losing their eternal souls. They are in need of being warned and rescued, and we are the ones who know about the dangers. Thus, it is our duty to warn them... I am afraid that sometimes we view duties as the drab, boring, and mundane things of life. But in reality, the work of being fishers of men should not be viewed as an undesirable duty, but as a blessing and privilege... "I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent.... In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.... But we had to celebrate and be glad, because the brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (Lk.15:7, 10, 32). There is great joy in heaven when those who are lost have been found. There was no greater joy for Christians of the first century too. For disciples today, the joy should be the same, as we know that we have in some way helped someone to find their salvation... I hope that our fishing is good....

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

02/27/2016

### Not Noises - Voices

If You remember the movie Field Of Dreams, everything got stirred up because Ray heard "Voices..." Today's quiz is about voices in the Bible. As always, have fun....

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. What "barren" woman of the Bible moved her lips in prayer, but made no sound? (a) Rachel, (b) Sarai, (c) Hannah, (d) Rubeous.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. According to Deuteronomy, where did God's voice come from? (a) a rock, (b) the fire,

(c) the wind, (d) the moon.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Who told Saul (OT) that obeying God's voice was more important than sacrificing animals? (a) Eli, (b) a witch, (c) Samuel, (d) David.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Which gospel mentions Rachel weeping for her children? (a quote from Jeremiah) (a) Matthew, (b) Mark, (c) Luke, (d) John.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What NT book says the divine voice sounds like a waterfall (rushing/many waters)? (a) John, (b) Galatians, (c) James, (d) Revelation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What apostle addressed the Pentecost crowd in a loud voice? (a) John, (b) Peter, (c) James, (d) all of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Who cried out at the top of her voice when Samuel was raised from the dead? (a) the witch of Endor, (b) Hannah, (c) his sister, (d) his wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. At what event did a voice say, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased? (a) his transfiguration, (b) his resurrection, (c) his baptism, (d) his first miracle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who heard God's voice after running away from Jezebel? (a) Elisha, (b) Elijah, (c) Ahab, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Who heard God speaking out of a whirlwind? (a) Moses, (b) Jonah, (c) Elisha, (d) Job.

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

02/29/2016  
Getting Help - The S.O.S.

"As she kept on praying to the Lord, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard" (1 Sam.1:12-13).

On. Jan.23, 2015, Louis Jordan set out from Conway S.C. to do some fishing. Sometime during the night, his boat flipped over and snapped the mast in half. Jordan found himself stranded in the middle of the ocean with few supplies and a capsized boat. The Coast Guard sent out a search party to look for Jordan, and the search ended after 10 days. He was in what appeared to be a hopeless situation. Jordan survived by eating raw fish and catching rainwater in salvaged containers. After 66 days at sea, Louis Jordan was rescued by a German fishing

vessel. Aside from catching the fish and collecting the water, he credited his survival to spending his days praying and reading from his recovered Bible. By what I would call all logical accounts, Jordan's faith led him to reach out to God during his extreme time of need. Though our needs might not be this extreme, is this what we do? Today's verses tell us about Hannah, the eventual mother of Samuel. She and her husband Elkanah had tried to have children together, but for many years were unsuccessful. Eli watched Hannah praying and because no sounds were being made, he thought she was drunk... She said this; "Do not take your servant for an evil woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief" (V 16). Hannah wisely turned to God for relief from the great sorrow she faced. Even in our hour of despair, we ought to seek God's help first. Prayer is a time when we can connect with God and pour out our hearts to Him... These prayers can be our real lifeline in times when we feel hopeless, rejected, or scared. Lets look at this story a bit closer during the week. You can follow along in 1 Samuel...

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