

09/02/2017
Multiple Marriages

This week's quiz will be about multiple marriages in the Bible. As comedienne Henny Youngman would say, "take my wife, please..." As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. This OT king had 700 wives and 300 concubines. (a) Saul, (b) Solomon, (c) Hezekiah, (d) Ahab.
- _____ 2. He was the 1st man in the Bible mentioned as having more than one wife. (a) Lamech, (b) Cain, (c) Enoch, (d) Noah.
- _____ 3. This OT judge fathered 70 sons by his many wives. (a) Gideon, (b) Samson, (c) Abimelech, (d) Jephthah.
- _____ 4. He had 2 wives named Peninnah and Hannah. (a) Samuel, (b) Eli, (c) Elkanah, (d) Clydeas.
- _____ 5. He had 3 wives named Judith, Bashemath, and Mahalath. (a) Gideon, (b) David, (c) Saul, (d) Esau.
- _____ 6. This early king had 2 wives named Ahinoam and Rizpah. (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Jehoshaphat.
- _____ 7. This woman was married to two of Judah's sons. (a) Judith, (b) Tamar, (c) Dinah, (d) Makir.
- _____ 8. Jesus told the woman at the well that she had at least _____ husbands. (a) 2, (b) 3, (c) 4, (d) 5, (e) He didn't say.
- _____ 9. What woman, given to Phaltiel by her father Saul, was later reclaimed by David? (a) Michal, (b) Ahinoam, (c) Abigail, (d) Abital.
- _____ 10. His wives included Maacah, Haggith, and Eglah. (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) I made up those names.

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

09/04/2017

Keeping Yourself In God's Love

"But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life" (Jude 20-21).

When there is someone in your life whom you love beyond description, you do everything humanly possible to keep yourself in their love. From the way you speak to the actions you perform, you say and do things to remind them of the depths of your love. Even more importantly, you remind them of the spiritual aspects of your life that bind you together. With this said, Christians have a responsibility for their own spiritual well-being, and Jude reminds his readers that they were to be about the business of building themselves up... This in no way means that God left us to our own devices out on an island with no help when we became Christians... The constant source of spiritual nourishment for the congregation of God's people is clothed in the most holy faith that is spoken and written about by the apostles of Christ.... As Jude's letter draws to a close, the importance of the Christian undertaking is stressed. As it is with our lives today, their resistance to false teaching and their perseverance in the apostolic faith would determine the outcome of their faith, and the end of their hope... Do you remember the words of verse three (3)? "Dear friends, although I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." You see, neither the kingdom of God nor the most holy faith can be spoken of without the other. Just as it is with that special person you love in your life, just words or deeds cannot stand by themselves. That love is a total package that involves words and actions accompanied by the powerful faith that you share. It is about that faith you have in one another, enjoined by your common faith in the Lord.... We must keep ourselves in God's love....

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

09/05/2017

Helping To Keep Others In God's Love

"Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear ----- hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh" (Jude 22-23).

Tuesday is trash day in our township, so before I started writing this morning, the trash got wheeled out to the curb. Hopefully we have gotten rid of stuff we didn't need so that our home will be a bit cleaner. Our brothers and sisters in the Lord, even if they make mistakes, should not be put out on the curb like trash... Just as we are not left out on a limb by the Lord, having

both His Word and the Holy Spirit to guide us, lets take a look at our brothers and sisters around us. Because one is weak and because he or she might have been carried away by sin or false teaching, does not mean they should be rejected or forgotten by Christians. Verse 22 of Jude is quite succinct when it says "be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them..." The faithful are to have mercy on those who are doubting. There's a litany of reasons why someone pulls away from the teachings of the Lord. Perhaps they are young in the faith and unsettled in what what they ought to believe and how they ought to act. Jude's brother James has given wonderful advice about this... "My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his ways will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins" (5:19-20). There may not be any clearer illustration of "hating the sin but loving the sinner" than those found in today's two (2) verses. When one sees a brother or sister stumbling into sin or error, we should do all within our power to reclaim that person. The Christian community should never be in the business of kicking folks out to the curb. We should never abandon a wavering soul, because we want to keep them within God's love. As an additional reminder of this, a brother of mine turned me to Jesus' words in this verse; "Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you; abide in My love" (Jn.15:9).

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

09/06/2017
The Doxology Of Jude

"To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy ---- to the only God and Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24-25).

For those of us that are old enough. we remember when we actually got a pen in our hands, took out a piece of stationary, and wrote to someone. We called it a letter. If it was to someone we cared for, we wanted something attention getting in the beginning, and a meaningful or even catchy ending. After all, who could forget "SWAK" before ending the letter? Jude's letter has a wonderful and attention grabbing salutation (greeting) and he hits a home run with his ending, maybe one of the most beautiful doxologies in the Bible. Just as a reminder, we call the ending a doxology, which is defined as a hymn or statement praising God. One familiar doxology might be, "Praise God from whom all blessing flow..." Already, Jude has reminded his readers that they are to build themselves up and keep themselves in God's love... Now, as he ends the letter, he balances the call to personal responsibility with the assurance of God's grace. Christ will always be there standing behind the believer, as Jude says that it our Lord Jesus Christ who is able to keep you from stumbling (falling)...There is absolutely nothing in these words to encourage the believer to be presumptuous. The assurance for standing firm in the faith is

placed squarely on the shoulders of the believer. Jude lets us know that the assurance is that of the one who will put his faith in Christ, who will keep looking to Him for guidance, who will repent and turn from sin. This person will stand... The doxology explains it to us.... To Him who is able to keep you from falling AND to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy... Its so great, its worth writing again... "to the only God and Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forevermore!" Can I get an amen? Amen....

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

09/07/2017

Wrapping up Jude

"Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil." (I Thess.5:21-22).

Though the book of Jude encompasses only twenty five (25) verses, it has some powerful advice for us. My first real takeaway is that we are to do everything possible to stay within the love of the Lord. As Christians, it is also our responsibility to look out for others within our sphere of believers to see that they stay within the love of the Lord too. Secondly, Jude reminds his first-century readers of the things taught by the apostles. I actually find it interesting that he identified their teachers as "the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." He wanted them to make no mistake that these were not some self-appointed teachers, but were sent from the Lord Himself... He reminded them that the apostles said that these false teachers would be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly lusts.... He further described these false teachers in verse 19 as men who will divide you. Lets remember that Jesus in John 17 prayed for unity among His followers. The apostle Paul taught about unity among the brethren in the fourth (4th) chapter of Ephesians. Unity is the key to strength, and evil prevails when unity is abandoned. The false teachers that Jude speaks of were evidently experts at creating doubt and causing division. I believe that doctrine is important, and what we believe determines how we behave... If folks believe that there are other ways to be reconciled to God other than through Jesus, chances are that we would not assemble each Sunday morning to worship or be involved in Bible study. Why bother? We must be reminded of Jesus' words from the Sermon On The Mount... Read Matt.7:21-23 for a jolting reminder. It starts out by saying this; "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven..." We must be people of the Word and use discernment to filter out what is false and accept what is true. This is what today's verse from I Thess. says... "Test everything. Hold on to the good."

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

09/08/2017
Bringers VIII ... Teachers

"Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning" (Prov.9:9).

As we continue our Friday devotionals about bringing the lost to the Lord. we come to a great challenge. To fully understand the impact of the Gospel on a seeker's heart is one of the greatest challenges of teaching the lost. Its kind of like trying to ply a child with candy and ice cream, in lieu of the nutritious food he or she needs. If the candy and ice cream is all they know, they will come to expect it as the norm and miss out on the foods they really need... If we try to draw people in with slick presentations, the only way to keep them going is with more slick presentations... If we try to draw them in with a positive promise, then we will have to keep them with a positive promise. Which do you think is the better way? There is simply only one thing that really makes Christians, and that is the Gospel. There is no substitute that even comes in a close second to the good news about Jesus Christ. When we draw folks in with the Gospel, it is the Gospel that will maintain them... There is a true bottom line here. Though the church is often viewed as a charitable organization with some inter-social aspects to it, that's only one small part....If people have absolutely no interest in the Gospel, the good news of Jesus, we have nothing else to offer them and they must be allowed to walk away. Perhaps something will happen to them later in life that kindles an interest in the Lord's Word and we can hope for that, but for the present, there are new fields to sow and we must move on to them. Next Friday we will look a bit more specifically about teaching the chronology of the Bible and the truths in it that point to Jesus...

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

09/09/2017
Red

Today's quiz revolves around a particular color.... RED.... You are to match each person in the left column with the correct statement about RED in his life.... Now don't you go seeing red if you cannot answer a question, and as always, have fun....

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|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Zechariah | (a) Commanded to slay a red heifer |
| _____ 2. Moabites | (b) Fed brother red stew |
| _____ 3. Jacob | (c) Gave offering of red ram's skins |

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| _____ 4. Judah | (d) Born red all over |
| _____ 5. Pharisees and Sadducees | (e) Vision of red horses |
| _____ 6. John | (f) Saw water as red as blood |
| _____ 7. Esau | (g) Shall have eyes red with wine |
| _____ 8. Israelites | (h) Had red marble pavement |
| _____ 9. Eleazar | (i) Predicted weather by red sky |
| _____ 10. Ahasuerus | (j) Vision of red dragon with seven (7) heads |

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

09/11/2017

Lessons From The Letters Of Peter

The apostle who seemingly always spoke up in the gospel records is Peter. He was candid, frank and often outspoken throughout the gospels, which leads him to be an interesting character... It took quite some time for Peter to commit to writing what the Holy Spirit inspired him to teach. Because he did, we are blessed to have two letters that are practical, inspiring, challenging and helpful to Christians of all ages. For several weeks, our devotionals will come from the two letters that Peter wrote. I hope that we will find that Peter wrote these letters just for us. After the day of Pentecost, the church was established and the leadership in Jerusalem fell into the hands of the apostles. Just as he was when he walked with Jesus for three years, Peter proved to be bold. The difference in Peter's boldness now is that he is being inspired by the Holy Spirit. Jesus made this promise to his disciples; "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever ---- the Spirit of truth" (Jn.14:15-16). This is the first of Jesus' promises to the disciples that after He was gone a Counselor/Helper/ Advocate would be there to guide them into the truth. As a result, we have this awesome confidence that the writings of Jesus' apostles were indeed inspired by the Holy Spirit. We have them neatly compiled for us in the Bible. Tomorrow, we will learn from the pen of Peter about "a heavenly inheritance." Peter's words, which resound through the corridors of time, will hopefully ignite a spark in us to want to learn more and more

about what the Spirit intended for us to know. To help prepare for this week, it would be helpful for all of us to read and meditate upon I Peter 1:1-9 and II Peter 1:1-4. Remember the words of the psalmist in Psalm one as he wrote about the "Blessed Man...But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Vs 2)

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

09/12/2017

A Heavenly Inheritance

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade ---- kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet.1:3-5).

As Peter's first epistle unfolds, two very basic themes come to the forefront. First of all, the Christians who Peter is addressing are suffering. Although the source of their persecution is not specifically mentioned, it probably comes from their neighbors and acquaintances who wanted nothing to do with their "new religion." They were resented, ostracized and shunned and it affected them in more than a religious way. They probably could not sell their goods in the market place. To top that, they were blamed for anything that went wrong and arrested at a moment's notice. Persecution is never far from the surface in I Peter and is explicit in these verses; I Peter 1: 6-9, 3:13-17, 4:12-19, 5:9-10... The second recurring theme of the letter involves the return of Jesus Christ... I believe he tempered the suffering that may be a part of a Christian's life in the world, with the hope of heaven in their future. When the Lord comes, He will reclaim His own, as eternity awaits them. The joys of the world to come are not to be compared with the suffering of the present... As Peter opens this letter, he says this; "Grace and peace be yours in abundance" (Vs 2). The lesson for the day, though it was addressed to them, is for us today also. The result of God's grace was and is, that Peter's readers have an inheritance reserved for them in heaven. Unlike worldly stuff, this one is imperishable, undefiled and untarnished... Nothing that the world could throw at them or us could cause a separation from the salvation that God has given. God is standing guard over the reward that is prepared for us. When the end comes and the Lord returns, eternal blessings will be granted to those in Christ.... I'll take an amen for that....

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

09/13/2017

The Joy/Pain Meter

"In this you will greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith ---- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire ---- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (I Pet.1:6-7).

How are all of us registering on the joy/grief meter? Does the meter say you are having many more trials in your life than joy, or visa-versa? Mine is lopsided on the joy side, but I know that some of us suffer more than others do, so we find great hope in today's passages from I Peter. When one comes to the Lord in faith and obedience through Christ, he or she becomes an heir of God's kingdom, and in this world shares life with the Son... "But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy' " (I Pet.1:15-16). This verse tells us that sanctification is for this life, and being born again is to participate in the blessings God has for His people... (look at Vs 23). Already one shares in the fellowship of those who have been redeemed in the same way we were, but still, this world is not all there is. As Christians, we are living in the time between the first appearance of Jesus and his second coming. Because He came once, the blessings of the kingdom have been realized. But because He is yet to come again, believers are to await the promises and anticipate life in God's presence. What Peter does for the people of the first century, and us, is a not so subtle reminder of a few things we ought to already know. Life won't always be a bowl of cherries with whipped cream on the top... The life of a Christian ought to be a joyous one, but not necessarily one that is completely filled with hilarity and fun. Suffering may be a part of holy living, but the standards of the world are overturned in Christ. Christians should strive to be strong in weakness (2 Cor.10) and powerful in humility. Like Jesus, a Christian should despise the shame the world might want to bring on us, and greatly rejoice...

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

09/14/2017

The Promises That Are Precious

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption of the world caused by evil desires" (2 Pet.1:3-4).

The two letters that Peter wrote are quite different in content and style but have some similarities that are important to us... They are alike in that both of them point a Christian's eyes toward the future or horizon. The Lord will return, and we live in the "between times," the time between Jesus' first coming and His second... As a result of His first coming, justification and

redemption have been realized. Today's verses are magnificent ones. Peter tells us that His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness, and he explains beautifully how this is accomplished.... It happens through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Knowledge is a very important word in 2 Peter. The Christian promises are not based on feelings, emotions and hearsay. For the present, Jesus, by His divine power, has granted to obedient believers everything to do with life and goodness. The promises of the past have been fulfilled. He has called us to His glory and moral excellence, and in the process, Christians partake in His divine nature... In verse four (4) he tells us more about those great and precious promises. Peter doesn't exactly explain or define what participating in the divine nature actually means. I think that he is saying that when we are born again in Him, put Him on in baptism and receive the Holy Spirit, we become an intimate partner with God, sharing in His very nature. Peter may also be reminding his readers that when they are united with Christ in heaven they will partake fully in the divine nature... Partaking of God means living according to knowledge, obedient to God's commands. Those are the promises that are precious....

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

09/15/2017

Bringers IX... The Timeline

"With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand" (Mk.2:33).

When we have the opportunity to try to bring a prospective seeker to the Lord, using a Bible timeline is a good method. A chronological overview of the Bible, for a number of reasons, is a good method because it is 100% gospel focused. Why? Because every event in the Bible points either forward or back to the Savior, and the timeline highlights the "interconnectedness" of the Bible in a beautiful fashion. A good place to start for the young Christian or the seeker is the book of Genesis. I think that this helps the seeker to understand that the Bible is from God and develops an awe for what He has revealed. It also builds a strong foundation as they are being led to Christ... It is a very "non-threatening" way to pique interest and elicit critical thinking... As we walk through the Old Testament, showing fulfilled prophecy that Jesus was the only possible individual who met the requirements to be our Savior, it is imperative that seekers are converted to the Jesus... Not baptism, the Bible or even the church... To Jesus... The OT is also replete with information that when honestly considered, completely destroys the popular notion that the Bible is a book of fables and fairy tales. Interweaving secular history into the Bible narrative is a further validation of the accuracy and credibility of the Bible in the mind of a hearer. All of this must be covered over a period of time so that the seeker may get a full flavor of God and His Son.... Today's verse reminds us that Jesus taught in such a way as to respect what His hearers were able to comprehend and bear. The words and thoughts of our almighty God can't help but

impress a seeker, as we present the gospel in an unadulterated way. True seekers will express an interest...

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

09/16/2017
That's To Die For

Though my title this morning is an idiom, (that piece of cheesecake is to die for) today's quiz is actually about things that famous people in the Bible actually did die for... You are to match the person with the reason...

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ___ 1. Jezebel | (a) an offering |
| ___ 2. Saul (OT) | (b) witnessing |
| ___ 3. Absalom | (c) to avenge the Philistines |
| ___ 4. Achan | (d) Naboth's vineyard |
| ___ 5. Ananias | (e) spoils of Jericho |
| ___ 6. Stephen | (f) hatred of a Jew |
| ___ 7. Uriah | (g) denouncing Herod |
| ___ 8. Samson | (h) deceit over land |
| ___ 9. Haman | (i) power |
| ___ 10. John the Baptist | (j) his transgressions |
| ___ 11. Abel | (k) to cover David's sin |

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

09/17/2017
Love's Goal

"Who shall separate us from the love of God?" (Rom.8:35) "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God" (1 Jn.3:9).

The believer enjoys the promise of eternal life. This is indeed our life's goal. The question we have been dealing with, who shall separate us from the love of God, is a linchpin in all of this. The question powerfully implies that believers can be separated from God's love, so a prime ambition for us is to see that this does not happen. The Bible teaches in many places that a believer on this earth does not carry eternal life around in his pocket. It is something that folks must strive for each and every day of their lives... When the apostle Paul penned his letter to Titus, he began it this way; "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of truth that leads to godliness ----- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time" (1:1-2). This being said, eternal life will be received at the end of time, because we do not hope for what we already have. As you read my 2nd verse this morning, were you intrigued just a bit? What's this thing about no one who is born of God will continue to sin all about. Reading the rest of the verse puts it into better perspective... Because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning because he has been born of God. The seed is the Word of God, which serves as a restraining influence, but we must bear in mind that Satan can steal the word out of a person's heart. If one is robbed of that power, there is nothing left to guard him from sin. Its like a thief coming up to you and saying this; "Lets go rob a bank." Our reply would hopefully be; "I cannot." As a Christian, our moral compass tells us that this is wrong, therefore, we cannot do it. We physically could do it but won't (can't) because we answer to a higher calling. John does not teach sinless perfection in 1 Jn.3:9, because in many other verses he plainly teaches that man can sin. Our job is to stay in the love of God so that we can reach love's goal...

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

09/18/2017
The Foundation Of Hope

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13).

No matter what religion one is dealing with, hope is a key ingredient. Great writers of all ages have "waxed poetic" over a definition or description of hope... British philosopher, statesman, scientist and orator, Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1526) wrote this; "Hope is a good breakfast, but a bad supper." I think he meant that when one builds his life on the sand, all he has left for supper is dying hopes... Let me use this quasi-definition, and see if you agree; Hope is a settled

conviction that problems can be overcome and tomorrow can be better than today. Not too bad, don't you think? It is a particularly human quality, and to live life without hope is to live on the level of a toad or squirrel. I firmly believe that without God, time smothers the hopes of youth, and life becomes dreary... If we are not firmly convicted to the Lord, hope dies with age. The word hope is not exceedingly common in 1 Peter, (4 times) when we compare it to the apostle Paul's writings. By comparison, the word is found six (6) times in Romans 8:20-25, and five (5) times in Romans 15 alone.... That notwithstanding, the importance of hope runs much, much deeper than the "word count" indicates. How is a Christian to cope with slander or ridicule from family or friends about the depth of their faith despite the good deeds they do? "Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet.2:12). Let's even take this a step forward... In a very gentle and respectful way, this is what a Christian is to do in the midst of doubt about their faith; "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...." (1 Pet.3:15). This week we will look at the basis for faith and hope that is presented to us in the book of 1 Peter. I hope we are all encouraged by it....

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

09/19/2017
Hope And Holiness

"Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed". As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; because it is written; 'Be holy, because I am holy' " (1 Pet.1:13-16).

There is a popular mindset out there that relegates hope to little more than whistling in the wind. Some even might dodge the responsibility all together by hoping they will win the state lottery and become instant millionaires... Hope in the New Testament is an entirely different thing. Christian hope is based on these things: (1) Christ rose from the dead, (2) He reigns at the right hand of God, (3) He is coming again. Rather than a whistle, Christian hope has real substance. The 16th century reformer John Calvin wrote this; "What would happen to us if we didn't rely on our hope, and our minds did not emerge above the world out of the midst of darkness through the shining Word of God and His Spirit?" Hope is certainly not a passive concept, but it is interwoven into a Christian's determination to do these two things; glorify God and resist sin. If you looked at my title today, you just saw where the holiness comes in. If we are to attain that great hope that has been promised to us, we must glorify God and resist sin. To make a completely clean break from the world and to look at Jesus as our role model is to be holy.... "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth." (1 Pet.2:22). Holiness is not just a

word that to be reserved for the thunder of Sinai or the majestic transformation of Jesus. Holy men and women strive to live sober and contemplative lives that always desire to glorify God among His people. To be holy is to take time to make that phone call, write a note or visit to someone who is hurting. To be holy is to shovel the snow from an elderly person's walk, without even thinking twice about it. Being holy is preparing food for someone who is sick. Peter's words give being holy a 10 on the rating scale.... "But just because He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; because it is written; 'Be holy, because I am holy.' "

Have a wonderful day.... Do good and give God the credit (that's holy) Love mark Phil.4:11

09/20/2017
Hope And Redemption

"Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet.1:21).

We must understand, that even though faith and hope are not passive words, they do not invite us to be complacent. God is not only our Father, but He is also an impartial Judge, so we must live our lives according to His rules. On one hand, Christians pray to a Father who has redeemed us by giving us His Son to die in our place. He is a God who always cares.... "Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Pet.5:7). On the other hand, we cannot take the love of God for granted, indulging in sinful activities and testing the extent of His mercy. "Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear" (1 Pet.1:17). I think that Peter is telling us about this reverent fear because we must have a wholesome reverence and respect for God. This is the basis for godly living. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline" (Prov.1:7). The redemption price for Christians is the precious blood of Christ... His innocent life was a redemption price much more valuable than the perishable things like silver and gold. All of this was according to God's plan, foreknown from the foundation of the world. Traffic laws are in place to make the roads and highways safer for us, but if we are caught disobeying one of them, we feel their "teeth." God has given teeth to the faith and hope of a Christian by raising Jesus from the dead. We can be inspired to live holy lives from four (4) directions... (1) The love of a merciful Father, who gave His Son as a redemptive force, (2) Being sobered by the prospect of standing before the Impartial Judge, (3) Humbled by the example of the Son, who became a human and lived an unblemished life, (4) Inspired by a Father who had the power to raise Jesus from the dead... Our faith and hope are backed up by our redemption.

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

09/21/2017
Hope And Obedience

"Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but is imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring Word of God. For,
And all its glory like the flower of grass.
The grass withers,
And the flower falls off,
But the Word of the Lord endures forever.
And this is the word which was preached to you" (1 Pet.1:22-25).

Unfortunately, truth has been diluted and compromised when it is understood to be merely a disposition of one's mind or an affirmation of facts. According to the apostle Peter, the truth was to be obeyed. It is only then that one's real hope can begin... According to Peter, his readers have been purified through obedience to that truth. To take this one step forward, obedience to the truth is neatly tied together with being born again. Like that old song "Love And Marriage," you can't have one without the other. One is born again when he or she obeys the living and enduring Word of God... (Vs. 23) No one should ever look at obedience to God in a purely mechanical way. To be born again is to give one's heart, mind and body to Christ, and though baptism seems to be a mechanical thing, it has serious spiritual implications. I believe that there is nor real new birth without this because it is the result of obedience. The importance of this obedience can never be minimized, because like hope, its importance to Peter's message is weighty. He appeals for godliness and perseverance in the face of suffering to remind his readers of the day when they were born anew... When they were baptized into Christ, they laid aside all the inconsequential things of their past lives, and became new and fresh, like newborns... (Read 1 Peter 2:1-3). To cap off today's verses, Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6, which I put in dark print. It reminds us all of the transitory and temporary nature of life and what happens to it. "The flower falls off, But the Word of the Lord endures forever." When his readers became Christians, they obeyed the truth... When they obeyed the truth, they acted, and when they acted, they were born again... And there ----- Hope Begins..

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

09/22/2017
Modern Faith And Hope

"Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified Him, so your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet.1:21).

Today's world wants to equate faith and hope with some kind of inward psychological experience or a mishmash of stuff. Hope is a very personal thing... No one is to stand in judgement on the faith of someone else, even a serial killer or sex-offender. Lets make no mistake about this... It is true that faith has an inward dimension, but only God knows the hearts of those who call on Him. That being said, faith cannot be simply reduced to some sort of psychological state, no matter how it is parsed. As we have read in 1 Peter this week, faith and hope are grounded in history and behavior. A person who develops faith will want to live a holy life of obedience. Redemption is then possible because in real time, Jesus shed His blood for us, God raised Him from the dead and through obedience we are born again.... The marvelous thing we have barely touched on this week is that faith and hope are lived out in the company of life's fellow travelers, the church. Christ is the head over His church church, (Col.1:18) so there is a community dimension to faith and hope... Those who think that hope is a personal lever that God has given us to pull in case there is some kind of emergency, or that faith is only between themselves and God, have failed to understand the message of Christ and His apostles. In the Christian community, believers support, encourage and when necessary, even correct one another. To sum up what this week in 1 Peter has been all about, here it is; Faith and hope have to do with holiness in life, with the redemptive work of Christ on the cross and with obedience to God's Word. Its a great way to end the week....

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

09/23/2017

Thieves

"He who steals my purse steals trash, but he who filches my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed"

From the title and Shakespearian quote, you have rightly surmised that today's quiz is about thieves in the Bible... Cheating on this quiz would be highway robbery... As always, have fun.

MATCH THE THIEF WITH THE OBJECT STOLEN AND FROM WHOM IT WAS STOLEN

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| ___ | ___ | 1. Ahab | (A) Joash | (a) Jerusalem Temple |
| ___ | ___ | 2. Jacob | (B) images | (b) the king's house |
| ___ | ___ | 3. Achan | (C) birthright | (c) Mother |
| ___ | ___ | 4. Absalom | (D) brass pillars | (d) Naboth |
| ___ | ___ | 5. Jehosheba | (E) silver | (e) Esau |

___	___	6. Rachel	(F) vineyard	(f) Athaliah
___	___	7. Shishak	(G) treasures	(g) Jericho
___	___	8. Micah	(H) hearts	(h) David
___	___	9. Nebuchadnezzar	(I) spoils	(i) Laban

Xtra Credit... For you Shakespeare buffs, whose quote leads off today's quiz?

_____ (a) King Lear, (b) Hamlet, (c) Iago, (d) Othello.

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

09/25/2017
Growth Into Salvation

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good" (1 Pet.2:1-3).

Back before the sophisticated electronics of the day, when a ticket was used to gain entrance into an event, or even on to a bus in the city, the conductor "punched" your ticket so that it was valid. Belief, repentance, confession and baptism are the beginning of a Christian's journey, but it is not like punching a ticket for eternal life... When one "puts on" Christ, it is to adopt a new way of life. A Christian, by his or her own choosing, either grows by faith into Christ or dies on the vine. Peter refused to settle for Christians huddled behind closed doors, hanging on to their faith by their fingernails... To use a U.S. Army phrase, he wanted them to be all that they could be. Nothing has changed though to 2017... The Lord inspired Peter to write that He wanted them, and us, to grow. Christians from day one have had their new walk begin when they stepped out in faith and obeyed the Lord. It begins with justification, forgiveness and redemption. Here's the important part of Peter's message to us this morning... The Christian is to then leave the basic principles and grow into trust and obedience. The inspired writer of the book of Hebrews agrees; "Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death and of faith in God..." (Heb.6:1). The Christian has always been nourished by study and prayer, sustained by faith and secured by living hope. Just as it is with a human body, Christian growth is multi-dimensional. When Christ comes into a believer's life, he or she is provided with a moral

compass. As folks grow into Christ, old habits lose their attractiveness, and the fellowship of God's people becomes even dearer. This week we will see how Peter's words can help mold us into what we should be, motivating us to grow into the clothing of salvation and holiness.

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

09/26/2017

Like Newborns

"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord" (1 Pet.2:2-3).

When organizations flounder around, unsure of themselves, they often find inspiration by turning to their histories. They recall the ideals that have driven them to this point. Some of the history may include how they dealt with struggles in the past, and the self-sacrifice it took to get through them. Israel looked to Abraham and the exodus from Egypt. America looks to The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill and Valley Forge... Christians look to Jesus and the cross... Just like organizations or institutions, individuals have a story too. Peter urges his readers to look back to the moment they came to the Lord and the fervor they had as new Christians... He asks them and us to think of the freshness of faith and the joy of peace they felt when they put on Christ, and to be inspired. Reflections help us to build up our faith as we see how far we have come. Isaiah said this; "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the Lord; Look to the rock from which you were hewn and the quarry from which you were dug" (51:1). Isn't that a fantastic verse? Just as Isaiah had in this verse, Peter found inspiration for future growth by looking to past glory. Looking to one's roots and foundation... Peter reminds us of our "new birth," in today's verses, just as he does in Vs. 23. Why? Because in each Christian's story is inspiration for growth as the journey unfolds... The milk he refers to is the Word that is needed if we are to experience that growth. Feeding on His Word will nourish us so that we can continue to grow to salvation...

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

09/27/2017

Chosen By God

"And coming to Him as a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a royal priesthood to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet.2:4-5).

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses told the people that God had chosen them. That was a difficult concept for them to understand.. Just why would the creator of the universe choose them for such favorable treatment? God's response to them was to make a few things perfectly clear. He had not chosen them because they were wonderfully upright folks. (Deut.9:5). He also had not picked them because they were mighty and numerous. So..... Just why did God make the children of Israel His chosen people? It is easy and simple... He chose them because He loved them, (Deut.10:15) and that was enough...Fast forward to Peter's day and find that he wanted his readers to bow their heads in gratitude. Why? He wanted them to grow and be strong because they were chosen.... Since we are Peter's readers too, that means us! Jesus, who had chosen them (us) was the Rock, a living stone, and now Peter mixes a few metaphors. With this mixture, Peter says that Christ is a solid and reliable rock, but he chooses and loves like a living Savior. In Christ, we have the absolute best of all worlds.... When a penitent sinner puts on Christ, he or she also becomes a rock in God's house. Christians are not a passive building material, but as today's verses tell us, they are living stones and holy priests... If a Christian despises their blessings, God holds them personally responsible. As living stones and royal priests, we ought to find the inspiration we need to grow in faith and obedience...

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

09/28/2017
The Time Of Our Stay

"If you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourself with fear during the time of your stay on the earth" (1 Pet.1:17).

Jane and I are pilgrims and sojourners right now as you can see from today's weather forecast. Each night we stay at a different motel, carrying our luggage in each evening and out each morning. Though we love Maine, we are not permanent residents. The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob settled in no city. as they lived in tents with no fixed dwelling. Abraham explained it this way; "I am a stranger and sojourner..." (Gen.23:4). The book of Hebrews says this about Abraham; "By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise.... for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:9-10). When the apostle Paul wanted to explain how the gospel had been opened to the Gentiles, these were his words; "For you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household" (Eph.2:19). In the kingdom of God, all people are equal, fellow-citizens with the saints, but we reside in a "fleshly" world... There are times that we can feel and sense the strangeness. Peter reminds us that we are on a "temporary visa," and our real home lies elsewhere. Christians are a chosen and redeemed people with inspired writers like Peter, Paul and James reminding us to live like the folks Christ made us to be. We must remember that the way we behave represents Christ and the church to the world. People may think we're weird

and different, but its because we are sojourners and pilgrims. When the Lord returns, everyone will be able to do nothing but glorify God. But for now, lets enjoys the time of our stay....

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

09/29/2017
Being Good Travelers

"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent..... (1 Pet.2:11).

Being on an extended trip changes the way you live every day. There in not the comfort of preparing your own food, sleeping in your own bed or even using you own bathroom. Instead of going to the dresser or closet to get your clothes for the day, you search though a suitcase, hoping you brought the right things. In yesterday's devotional, we looked at ourselves as "pilgrims" on a journey through this world. Its a great sojourn, but there are certainly some speed bumps along the way. Sometimes it is necessary to contemplate our next step on the trip, so we don't get lost in a world that tries to bump us off track. When Peter addresses his readers, he reminds them that they (we) have been transformed. They (we) have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; they have been saved from sin... If there is any inclination on their parts to think life would be different now that they were Christians, the mistake soon became obvious.

The same temptations, sins and lusts of the flesh that existed before are still there. The difference is that the Lord calls upon us to be good travelers... The only way for this to happen is by growing in the faith. With all those evil things around us, a more powerful faith is required to resist them. We passed a hardware store yesterday that had this as its motto; "Bait, bolts and bullets..." It appears that they thought these were the necessities of life for a person in their area. God provides us with the necessities for good Christian living on our journey too... Since we cannot remain as babes in Christ forever, we must use His essentials. For our sojourn to be a successful one, large amounts of prayer, fellowship, and Bible study are available. We've found a lot of highway construction here in Maine the last few days. God provides the way to get though the rough spots so that we will be good travelers...

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