

06/01/2017  
Out Of The Shadows

"What, then, was the purpose of the law?" (Gal.3:19). "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming...." (Heb.10:1) "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so we may be justified by faith" (Gal.3:24).

As we complete this series of devotionals about the Law, we find that the Lord used this system to picture "in types and pictures," the more glorious system which was to come. "Now these things happened to them as an example..."

(I Cor.10:11). My 2nd verse this morning helps to explain this. Note these things; (1) The wanderings in the wilderness were symbolic of God's people under the New Testament, (2) The temple and the tabernacle were types of the church under this dispensation, (3) The sacrificial lamb under the law was but typical of the Christ, the lamb of God, (4) Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah, and Isaac are used by Paul (Gal.4:22-31) to illustrate the two systems, (5) Moses was a type of Christ (Deut.18:15) who was to come. With this in mind, surely, one who would understand the

Christian religion must understand the law of Moses. My 3rd scripture this morning helps to understand another important point... Jesus was born as a Jew and came to the Jews. We notice as the church came into being the Jews were the 1st to receive the gospel of Christ. Why? The law was instituted to become our tutor (schoolmaster in KJV) to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith... The world just wasn't ready to receive Christ and His gospel. This tutor or schoolmaster was to train and educate people and lead them to Jesus. Regular folks like us, by allowing the 1st covenant to tutor us, became prepared for the 2nd one.... : "He takes away the 1st in order to establish the 2nd" (Heb.10:9). Under the present dispensation, which is a better one, we must obey Christ instead of Moses. We must give an attentive ear to Jesus and the inspired words of the apostles. Inasmuch as the law has ceased, no one today should attempt to go back to it as a rule of faith. Paul put it this way; "You who have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace" (Gal.5:4). Make no mistake.... We serve a all wise and an Almighty God... It so great being a Christian....

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

06/02/2017

"Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together. To which tribes go up, even the tribes of the Lord ----- An ordinance for Israel ----- to give thanks to the name of the Lord" (Psa.122:3 & 4).

As we continue our Friday devotionals dedicated to peace, happiness and prosperity found in Psalm 122, we come to verses 3 and 4. Jerusalem was Israel's main city, and of course, the temple was there. People came from far away to visit the temple, especially on feast days. I think the Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together, has a special meaning. The operative terms are compact and together.... I believe that these two words are speaking about unity. I would like to compare Jerusalem and the temple to the church today. All through the gospels, Jesus calls for unity. Paul reiterates it powerfully also. A divided house (church) cannot prosper because one cannot find peace there. Good Christian folks will not attend a strife-torn assembly, because the church is supposed to lead us into a life of peace... "in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you are also being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph.2:21-22). Christians are to be workers together with God. In verse four (4) of today's scriptures, the psalmist is telling us that peace, happiness and prosperity are linked to gratitude. One of the traits in humans that we find the most despicable is ingratitude. I have heard this said; "No one has ever truly prospered by forgetting those who helped him along the way." Do you agree with that? When a good deed is done, we don't expect the recipient to fawn all over us forever, but we do want to feel the gratitude.

That gratitude, of course, extends to the the Lord as we contemplate what He has done for us. All of our prayers

ought to contain words of thanks if we are to see true peace and prosperity in our lives... More about peace, happiness and prosperity next Friday.

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

06/03/2017

### Climb Every Mountain

As you can guess, today's quiz is about famous (or not so famous) mountains in the Bible. Be careful in choosing your answers, I wouldn't want you to peak too soon...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. On what mountain did Elijah challenge the priests of Baal? (a) Horeb, (b) Carmel, (c) Ararat, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What mountain did Balaam plan to curse Israel from? (a) Pisgah, (b) Moriah, (c) Lebanon, (d) Abarim
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What mountain did Moses see the Promised land from? (a) Tabor, (b) Seir, (c) Nebo, (d) Hor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What mountain Barak and Deborah descend to defeat Sisera? (a) Lebanon, (b) Ebal, (c) Gilead, (d) Tabor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. On what mountain did Noah's ark land? (a) Sinai, (b) Ararat, (c) Pisgah, (d) Harmon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. On what mountain did Jesus' transfiguration occur? (a) Olives, (b) Harmon, (c) Zion, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. At what mountain did Moses see the burning bush? (a) Horeb, (b) Moriah, (c) Ebal, (d) Gerizim.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. On what mountain did Solomon build the temple? (a) Carmel, (b) Gilboa, (c) Moriah, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. By what mountain were Saul and Jonathan killed by the Philistines? (a) Gilboa, (b) Pisgah, (c) Nebo, (d) Tabor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. On what smoke covered mountain did Moses meet God? (a) Olivet, (b) Nebo, (c) Gilead, (d) Sinai.

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

06/05/2017

### An Escape Artist

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore (neglect) such a great salvation?" (Heb.2:1-3).

Harry Houdini was a great illusionist and stunt performer from the late 1800's to early 1900's. Maybe he is the most famous of the magicians that were classified as escape artists. Some of his escapes from multiple locks and chains

were remarkable. The word escape plays an important role in today's verses, and will be a part of this week's devotionals. The words spoken in the 1st two verses are about the truth of God's Word regarding salvation.... The writer is trying to instill their importance to the extent that he asks our question of the week which is this; "how shall we escape if we ignore (neglect) such a great salvation?" We should not allow what we have heard to slip or glide by us without profit. In all situations of life, at all times, and in all places, we should not allow the Word to slip. Those words of wisdom are our keys to the Lord's kingdom, and Jesus was dead serious in saying this about that kingdom; "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness..." (Matt.6:33). The danger of permitting salvation to slip through our fingers may arise from many sources such as lack of understanding (Matt.13:19) or the cares of the world, (Matt.13:22). This is expressed in the Bible (Lk.14:16-20) as seeing some land, testing some oxen or marrying a wife... We must not allow the deceitfulness of riches, hard times, prejudice, love of the world, love of pleasure, compromise or desire to please man, or a lack of love for the truth keep us from salvation. If we permit these things to lock us up so tightly that we can't escape, we run the risk of being lost to God. The Word of God gives each of us the ability to be escape artists. Lets take full advantage of it...

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

06/06/2017

#### A Warning About Neglect

"For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Heb.2:2-3a).

Have you ever seen what happens to a house that has been abandoned? It may have not been in very bad condition at the time of its abandonment, but things begin to go downhill for the house rather quickly. No one has come in with a wrecking ball, but the deterioration is due to neglect... The inspired writer, in his warning against the peril of neglect, mentions two (2) truths in today's verses. "The message spoken by angels was binding." It was not fluctuating or wavering in any sense, but fixed and settled. It was definite.... Folks like to call this type of sin one of omission. "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (1 Jn.3:4). Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward. "Transgression" (sin) is going beyond, sin of commission. "Disobedience" is the refusal to comply with a command, sin of omission.... "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (Jas.4:17). Both classes of sin received a just recompense of reward. They were both punished! The apostle Peter (2 Pet.2:4-6) goes all way back into the Old Testament to prove his point about this, referencing the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. He finishes the statement like this; "And made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." Neglect your car and it will break down.... Neglect your job and you'll lose it.... Neglect your relationships and they will fall apart.... Neglect your clothes and they'll become dirty and wrinkly.... We should never be so blind or naive as to think we can neglect the great salvation, God's master plan to save, and escape condemnation. Lets never even contemplate abandoning our first love....

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

06/07/2017

#### Take Your Medicine And Eat Your Veggies

"How shall we escape if we neglect (ignore) such a great salvation" (Heb.2:3).

In my next to last visit to the my doctor, (he is new to us) he made several suggestions. Eat better, exercise regularly and lose some weight were among them. Perhaps some of these suggestions have been made to you too. The suggestions are not a part of some great mystery of life, are they? Even though today's familiar verse lets us know that salvation is great, and puts it into plain and simple words, if we are not disposed to listen, what good will the words do? For the wonderful blessing to be effectual, it must be appropriated. A book may have helpful information for us within its pages, but it directly affects only those who read it... The shining sun drives out the darkness, but for us to see we must open up our eyes... Vegetables in a garden contain many helpful nutrients, but they are only useful to those who eat and digest them. If we have been prescribed a particular medication to help cure a condition, it does no good if it remains in the bottle... So it is with the truths of Christianity. They come from Christ and have been confirmed (Heb.2:3) but they will not save if we neglect them. Christ did His part in giving the Word, and we must do our part in obeying it. Condemnation is not just reserved for thieves, murderers, scoffers, atheists or out in out bad guys... Neglect alone will destroy a man. Make no mistake about it... Just as neglect will destroy teeth, wreck health, break friendships, turn a beautiful garden to weeds and briars, ruin a business, or transform a lovely home into a shack, it will condemn us. My advice today is to take your medicine and eat your veggies....

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

06/08/2017

#### Neglect Vs. Diligence

"How shall we escape if we neglect (ignore) such a great salvation?" (Heb.2:3).

"Catch, then, Oh catch the transient hour;  
Improve each moment as it flies;  
Life's a short summer ---- man a flower."

Samuel Johnson

As we fast forward to the judgement, the Bible has plenty to say about neglect vs. diligence. Jesus told us (Matt.7:24-27) that the wise (diligent) man built his house upon the rock, while the foolish (negligent) man built his upon the sand. We have all sung the children's song about this and know the fate of the negligent man. "For it is time for judgement to begin with the family of God; if it begins with us, what will be the outcome of those who do not obey the gospel?" (I Pet.4:17). The apostle Peter strongly infers here the destiny of those negligent folks who do not obey the truth of the gospel of salvation... If we turn to Jesus' Parable of the Talents, the inheritance of the one-talent man who hid his talent instead of trying to improve on it is explained.... "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has 10 talents... For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Throw that worthless servant outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt.25:28-30). The one-talent man's condemnation came as a result of his neglect. We only have to go a few verses back to the Parable of the Ten virgins to again picture the condemnation of those five (5) who were negligent... Peter (II Pet.1:10) commands the Christian to be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure... The Bible is all about pressing forward, working out one's salvation and adding action to resolution. We seldom read of resolutions or intentions of the apostles, but have a whole book called The Acts Of The Apostles.... Lets all be acting, working and serving Christians, because that's the way the Lord wants us to be.... You might read over Samuel Johnson's quote today... It pretty worthwhile.

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

06/09/2017

### Standards And Prayers

"There the thrones for judgement stand, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure" (Psa.122:5-6).

Our Friday's have been dedicated to seeking the peace, happiness and prosperity a Christian wants to find in his or her life, and the 122nd Psalm has been our text. To me, "There the thrones for judgement stand," say that one of the prerequisites for peace and prosperity is linked to standards. What kind of standards, you ask? First and foremost are the standards set for what are the right and wrong things to do in our lives. In the days of the Judges in the Old Testament, the need for a new judge was always punctuated by this; "The Israelites did evil in the sight of the Lord" (3:7, 3:12, 6:1, 10:6). Standards of proper behavior cannot be devised by each person. Tried and proven standards of decency cannot be flippantly discarded. The Bible has standards for the sacredness of marriage, the church, law and order, respect for the aged and human life. These must be held near and dear to us if we are to have true peace and prosperity...The next peace and prosperity linkage is found in verse six (6). "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure" The KJV renders it this way; "They shall prosper that love thee..." We can never leave prayer out of our lives if we hope to be happy, peaceful and prosperous... I believe that these attributes are directly attached to prayer. Jesus prayed, "give us this day our daily bread" (Matt.6:11) as he taught us how to pray... The writer of the Epistle of James says (4:1-3) that peace results from prayer, but one of my favorite passages is found in Phil.4:6-7. I cannot end this devotional any better than the Bible's inspired words does; "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace that transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

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

06/10/2017

### Cities Great And Small

Today's quiz is about cities in the Bible, both large and small. Don't get yourself into a jam trying to answer these questions...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What Asia Minor city is the 2nd of the 7 churches mentioned by John? (a) Laodicea, (b) Philadelphia, (c) Ephesus, (d) Smyrna.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What city was Paul's hometown? (a) Damascus, (b) Berea, (c) Tarsus, (d) Philippi.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. To what city of Macedonia did Paul write 2 letters? (a) Corinth, (b) Thessalonica.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What Asian city was the home of Lydia? (a) Thyatira, (b) Troas, (c) Derbe, (d) Berea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What city on the Euphrates did Abraham leave? (a) Mamre, (b) Ur, (c) Chaldea, (d) Zoar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In what city were followers of Jesus 1st called Christians? (a) Philippi, (b) Lystra, (c) Antioch, (d) Derbe.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When Paul was shipwrecked, what island did they wash up on? (a) Crete, (b) Cyprus, (c) Malta, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What city is usually mentioned as the southern limit of Israel? (a) Dan, (b) Beersheba, (c) Emmaus, (d) Cana.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who rebuilt Babylon on a grand scale? (a) Nebuchadnezzar, (b) Nimrod, (c) Belshazzar, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What was the name of the city that Cain built? (a) Cush, (b) Enoch, (c) Babel, (d) Haran.

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

06/12/2017  
Just The Truth

"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal.4:16).

One of the classic lines in the movie, "A Few Good Men," came when a colonel played by Jack Nicholson was on the witness stand and being questioned by a navy lawyer played by Tom Cruise. At a crucial time in the examination, the two bantered over a question and Cruise demanded a truthful answer. Nicholson's classic line was this; "You can't handle the truth!" Does the verse I chose for my text today make a bit more sense? The epistle in the form of a letter which the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatian churches was to root out some erroneous doctrine introduced by people we like to call "Judaizing teachers." Those teachers were trying to indoctrinate Jewish Christians in their earlier faith. They were returning to the Mosaic law for justification (Gal.5:4), and there was none there...Also, they were being seduced to recognize circumcision as a principle of faith... (Gal.5: 2, 6). Paul really gets down to brass tacks (the truth), and describes their perverted state in direct terms (Gal.1:6-7; 3:1; 4:9; 5:7).... Here is the importance of all this as we try to get to a bottom line. "I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you" (4:11). I believe that the efforts he is talking about is just the truth! What are we getting at here, you ask? The question that is today's verse give us a hint. I think it proves that even children of God should be rebuked, when needed if they stray from the truth of God's Word... When Paul wrote to Timothy, these words ring out to me... "All scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..." (2 Tim.3:16). Most of the New Testament was written to instruct, rebuke, correct, train and encourage Christians, rather than instruct aliens... This week we will take a long look at today's question and see how it applies to our lives. We'll be seeking the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. I hope we all can handle it.

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

06/13/2017  
The Truth May Make Enemies

"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal.4:16). "When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly wrong" (Gal.2:11).

Sometimes examples need to be shown to us before we are able to comprehend the gravity of following the truth. In today's 2nd verse, we find Paul opposing Peter face to face. More powerful Jews within the church were forcing Gentile converts to follow Jewish customs, especially circumcision of adult males. Though on the surface this may not

have seemed to be a big deal, it would represent a step backwards instead of forward... Jews were supposed to act like Christians, as were Gentile converts, and not followers of the Mosaic law. In Acts 8:18-23, Peter rebuked Simon the sorcerer when he saw the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit and tried to buy it... The apostle John openly rebuked Diotrephes by name for the sin he had committed in III Jn 9. Paul suggested this to Timothy; "Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that others may take warning" (I Tim.5:20). All of this teaching reinforces that the preaching of the truth may make enemies. Moses tried to be a friend to Pharaoh by telling him the truth (Ex.10:28-29) but Pharaoh hated him for it. Elijah was pursued by the hatred and enmity of the wicked Jezebel because he was a stalwart defender of the truth in I Kings 18:17-19, while the enemies of Jesus feared the truth of the resurrection so much that they bribed the soldiers on guard to falsify information. Herod and Herodias hated the truth so much that they beheaded John the Baptist for preaching it. Here's one that ought really to make us think... King Ahab said this of the prophet Micaiah; "There is still one man (Micaiah) through whom we can inquire of the Lord, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad" (I Kings 22:8). Is that an example of the truth hurting, or what? The greatest fault in the religious world is all about folks trying to change the Bible to fit them rather than changing themselves to fit the truth of God's Word.... Sometimes, making an enemy might not be completely bad....

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

06/14/2017

#### Fighting For the Truth

"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth" (Gal.4:16).

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again;  
The eternal years of God are hers;  
But error, wounded, writhes in pain,  
And dies among his worshippers."

----- William Cullen Bryant

Men have fought the truth on some levels for at least two (2) basic reasons. Some have become unconscious enemies of the truth. They have fought it in ignorance... The apostle Paul, while he was still called Saul, is an outstanding example of fighting the truth unknowingly as we read in Acts 26:9 and I Tim.1:13. To his credit, as some will do, many will find the truth as Paul did. "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved, and so all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (I Thess.2:10 & 12). According to this verse, others are blinded because they do not love the truth... There have been many who have knowingly and purposefully fought the truth, and Jesus explained it this way; "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (Jn.3:19). If you've ever turned over a large rock or rotting log in the forest, creatures that hate the light are exposed and start to scramble wildly. Spiritual creatures of darkness hate the light too. They hate the light to the extent that they prefer darkness to light and error to truth. It is why Jesus, in the last verse from John, said that they loved darkness instead of light, because their deeds were evil! The deeds of those who prefer darkness to light will always give them away...Here is something that we can have a wonderful confidence in; No matter how much truth is fought against, it will survive. I hope you like the William Cullen Bryant quote I used today. I think it reinforces some of these thoughts... No matter what people may try to do with the truth of God's Word, it shall rise again. I believe that Bryant has echoed Biblical principle.... "Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again..." The truth is worth fighting for....

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

06/15/2017  
Hangin' On To The Truth

"Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" (Gal.4:16). "Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (II Tim.4:3-4).

As we come to our last devotional about truth telling, the original question in Gal.4:16 becomes crystal clear. It confirms the fact that the truth must be preached and lived at the expense of making enemies. A compromising attitude toward preaching the truth leads to apostasy, and Paul reveals how this happens in our 2nd verse this morning... It starts with an attitude like, to suit their own desires, and goes on to a segregation of teachers as they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear... It then unravels to this; they will turn their ears from the truth... Before long, the truth has flown out of the window and is replaced by turning aside to myths. If we are to be completely honest with ourselves, it is urgent to realize that there are attitudes, if universally accepted, that would weaken and eventually destroy the church. Lastly, there is something else that must be considered. Almost all advertising is based on pleasing people. The best cars, shampoos, skin creams or athletic wear are those which make folks feel good about themselves. The attitude that attempts to please people rather than save people is simply is just the wrong way to go... Lets look at Paul's words about this; "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal.1:9). Sometimes standards are lowered in an attempt to bring in larger and larger crowds. If one church draws in great crowds, another one might lower standards even farther to entice more.... Lets make sure that the church does not become a mad race to make itself the easiest instead of the safest and most truthful... We've got to be hangin' on to the truth...

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

06/16/2017  
As Happy As You Want To Be

"May there be peace be within your walls and security within your citadels. For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, 'peace be within you.' For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity" (Psa.122:7-9).

As we conclude these Friday devotionals about peace, happiness and prosperity, we come to the two last prerequisites for their attainment... May peace be within your walls and security (prosperity) within your citadels (palaces) is what verse seven (7) says. One must always resist the temptation to blame others when they are not happy enough. You've heard all of these; I would be happy IF; (1) I were young again, (2) I were older, (3) I had a few million dollars, (4) I was better looking, (5) I was more talented... etc. To many, unfortunately, happiness is always just around the corner, but never found. These are the folks that don't take a hard look at themselves. There is a quote from Abraham Lincoln that goes something like this; "Most people are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Finally we come to the last linchpin to happiness... For the sake of my brothers and friends..... I will seek your prosperity infers that peace, happiness and prosperity require good relationships with one another... I don't think there are more miserable people around than those that are self-centered... "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Lk.12:15). Is there any greater happiness in the world than the feeling we get from helping others? Do we consider how we can help our husbands, wives, kids, friends or even the needy? The good we do for others rebounds with joy and blessing to ourselves. We all might like to read 2 Cor.9, where we have an entire chapter dedicated to just this. I hope that we



have found the 122nd chapter of Psalms to be the ancient recipe for happiness, peace and prosperity that it is.

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

06/17/2017

More Cities

There really are a lot of cities and towns mentioned in the Bible, So this morning we'll get tested again on our knowledge of them... Remember... Cross at the corners and wait for the light.... Its as easy as ABCD....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What is the 1st of the 7 cities in Asia mentioned by John in Revelation? (a) Pergamum, (b) Thyatira, (c) Ephesus, (d) Sardis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In what Greek city did Silas and Timothy stay while Paul went to Athens? (a) Berea, (b) Troas, (c) Derbe, (d) It doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What city was the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus? (a) Bethany, (b) Jerusalem, (c) Cana, (d) Joppa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What city was the site of Jacob's famous dream? (a) Haran, (b) Paddan-Aram, (c) Mamre, (d) Bethel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. In what Canaanite city were Joseph's bones laid to rest? (a) Shittim, (b) Shechem, (c) Hebron, (d) Timnath.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In what city was Cornelius converted? (a) Jerusalem, (b) Azotus, (c) Caesarea, (d) Damascus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. When John the Baptist was in prison, where did Jesus stay? (a) Bethany, (b) Capernaum, (c) Nazareth, (d) It doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What city was the home of Philemon? (a) Colossae, (b) Philippi, (c) Ephesus, (d) Thessalonica.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What sinful Greek city had two (2) letters sent to it by Paul? (a) Thessalonica, (b) Corinth, (c) Colossae, (d) Athens.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. In what Syrian city did Paul (then Saul) have his sight restored? (a) Palmyra, (b) Emmaus, (c) Hebron, (d) Damascus.

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

06/19/2017

### Life Lessons From James

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith brings perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking in anything" (Jas.1:2-4).

I am going to begin a series of lessons that have the book of James as their source. This book has some Old testament features. By this I mean, like the wisdom we find in the OT, James concerns itself with life's dilemmas and ironies. For example, speech is a blessing. but as we all know, unchecked speech that the brain does not process and filter first, can do great danger. In some cases, the lives of good and godly people are blessed, (1:17) and they are like the folks of Psalm 1:3 in which they are like a tree planted by streams of water.... I believe wisdom teaches us that certain truths can be taught through the use of irony. Sometimes trials and suffering come from one place, and sometimes, from another. True wisdom is being able to deal with trials regardless of their source, so that faith flourishes and one's resolve becomes even more firm. In today's verses, James challenges people to find joy in trials or hardship... That's not always easy, is it? The writer lays down the gauntlet by saying that trials have a way of producing perseverance. It's the "trial" of fire that makes iron into more useful steel and takes gold to its purest form.

This we know for sure! Christians are to persevere when their paths are either smooth or bumpy. Under each circumstance, we are to seek God's solace in prayer, seeking and trusting in His goodness... Wisdom provided by God will result in prayers building on confidence and trust. The source of the hardship or trial is less important than the way believers deal with them... Trust in the Lord will bear us through any stuff that comes our way. Tomorrow we will take a closer look at finding the joy mentioned in today's verses. Hopefully, we will find ourselves to be the joyful folks that God intended for us to be.

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

06/20/2017

### Joy Under Pressure

"Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (Jas.1:2-4).

You might notice that the verses used for today's devotional are the same as those used yesterday. If you are really discerning, you may notice that a word or two are different because yesterday they were from the NIV and today they're from the NAS. The key word that has changed from yesterday to today is endurance instead of perseverance.... I think that the word trials that is used refers to anything one faces which may encourage that person to do ungodly things. From what I can gather, this Greek word may be considered differently depending on the context. An example might be trials that come from within as in 1 Tim.6:9. In these cases we tend to call them temptations... James tells us (1:14) that when one is tempted or tried, he is drawn away by his own desires. When temptations come from the outside (1 Pet.4:12), we usually refer to them as trials. These trials may also come in the form of sickness, financial difficulties, or accidents. The ones that James addresses might actually be coming from within the church itself. OK... By now you're probably wondering when I'm going to address that "joy thing" found in the verses. From the outside, few of us would logically deduce that trials, temptations, health difficulties or accidents could possibly bring joy. Paradoxical though it seems to be, James urges his readers to consider it all joy when you encounter various trials... Evil stuff is not considered to be an occasion for joyousness, but here is the crux of it all. One may consider their trials to be joyous when those trials coax them into a closer partnership with God.... With the

help of the Lord, Christians are able to turn evil into blessing, because God works His gracious will even though events are evil in themselves. Here is our great thought for the day... When the believer, in his goodness and innocence faces trials, he can enlist God in bringing forth goodness.... The endurance of trials may result in patience and perseverance. The end product of trials when received joyously is that Christians stand before God perfect, made complete by faith in Christ....

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

06/21/2017

#### The Wisdom Of Prayer

"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed about by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is double-minded, unstable in all he does" (Jas. 1:5-8).

James makes an interesting transition from lacking anything in verse four (4) of the 1st chapter to asking God for wisdom. Asking, in turn, leads to a powerful consideration of faith. I think that James is focused on the need for Christians to ask for wisdom from the Lord, who is its source... In this, one gains the confidence from the truth that God hears when His people ask. Like all of God's gifts, wisdom is distributed in a generous manner to those who ask. From this generosity of God, James is now ready to turn attention to the way in which petitions (prayers) are to be offered... Here is an immutable truth! God hears those who ask! What James is emphasizing here is what we should emphasize also. Confidence in the Lord is to be commended. When one prays, it should be with the utmost confidence that God hears, that He is able to grant petitions, and wants to bless His people... That's us! There is a warning given in today's verse, however, that must be considered. The double-minded man believes that God acts in human affairs only when it is convenient to him.... When its not convenient, he trusts in his own efforts, whatever they might be. His heart or trust may be with God, but only partway. James has coined the word double-minded to describe a divided heart. Lets be sure that we are counted among those who pray in faith, with the confidence that God hears the petitions of His people and that He is able to grant requests. There may not be a better package deal on the planet that wisdom and prayer...

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

06/22/2017

### The Endurance Of Temptation

"Blessed be the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures" (Jas. 1:12-18).

You may have noticed that this morning's reading is rather long, but it must be to complete the thoughts promoted by James. Those who follow Jesus must be prepared to suffer with the Lord is a theme that never goes away in the New Testament. For James, endurance and trials go together... The reason that trials are to be considered as occasions for joy is that those who endure will be approved by God and he will receive the crown of life.... Interesting enough, the word crown most often refers to a wreath placed on the heads of victors in the games. Since it is a symbol of victory rather than lavishness, the word crown would be better translated as "life's wreath of victory." Another thing that James urges his readers to do is take responsibility when they have failed to resist sin. In what we refer to as "The Lord's Prayer," Jesus said, "do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil" in Matt. 6:13. James makes this one thing crystal clear; in no way does God want to induce sin in His people so that He can judge them guilty... If one argues that God is the source of temptation they maintain that He actually takes delight in evil. Although we may not be able to comprehend all of His providential purposes on a human level, we can be sure of this; God's desire is for goodness rather than evil to emanate from His people... When we pray for deliverance from temptation, it ought to be a petition that the Lord will help to keep us from the circumstances where they might be inclined to succumb to evil. It ought to be accepted without reservation that the Lord will not by design, place His people in settings because He wants to see them fail... Lets all act like we are indeed His first fruits....

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

06/23/2017

### Fishing With Lures

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those that love Him"

James uses compelling metaphors to call attention to how deceitful sin can actually be. As a fish is drawn to a lure, or a mouse is drawn to a baited trap, sin appeals to the basic animal desires of man... In the end, it is able to destroy. Unfortunately, desires drag men and women away and lure them with powerful enticements. In verse fifteen (15) of chapter one (1), James uses the language of birth in a negative way. Desire, when taken into the heart and sloughed off lightly, gives birth to the committing of sin... James returns to that birth language (He brought us forth), but in a more positive way in verse eighteen (18). This time, the word of truth gives birth to a new creation. James approaches becoming a Christian in much the same way Jesus responded to Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-8) or Paul to Titus (Titus 3:5), as he uses the terms of a new birth... To be saved is to be "brought forth" by the word of truth. As Christians, when the word of truth is in us, we ought to be able to resist the desires and lures of sin. Since they are all around us and embraced by many in the world, the resolve that started when we were born anew, ought to strengthen us... In today's verse, James uses a very compelling progression that may be good for us to assimilate as a

credo. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those that love Him. The progression you ask? Here it is! trial.... perseverance.... crown of life..... Testing to endurance to life....

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

06/24/2017

### More Cities And Towns

I didn't realize there were so many cities and towns in the Bible, but there are... In today's quiz you will answer some questions related to them.... Your GPS won't help.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What city that Paul visited had the patron saint of Artemis (Dianna)? (a) Joppa, (b) Ephesus, (c) Philippi, (d) Thessalonica.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. In what city did Jonah board a ship bound for Tarshish? (a) Joppa, (b) Nineveh, (c) Paphos, (d) Myra.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What Philistine city was the home of Goliath? (a) Ekron, (b) Ashdod, (c) Gath, (d) Eglon.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What Philistine city did Amos curse for its slave trade with Edom? (a) Ekron, (b) Gath, (c) Ashdod, (d) Gaza
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Where did Abram go after leaving Ur? (a) Haran, (b) Sodom, (c) Moreh, (d) Zoar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. In what city were Paul and Barnabas deserted by John Mark? (a) Paphos, (b) Perga, (c) Derbe, (d) Iconium.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Of the 7 cities John writes to in Revelation, which receives the most praise? (a) Ephesus, (b) Smyrna, (c) Laodicea, (d) Philadelphia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. To what city was Paul's longest epistle sent? (a) Rome, (b) Corinth, (c) Ephesus, (d) some unknown city.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. From what city did Paul bid farewell to the Ephesian elders? (a) Troas, (b) Assos, (c) Kiros, (d) Miletus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What city was Melchizedek the king of? (a) Mamre, (b) Salem, (c) Zoar, (d) Haran.

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

06/26/2017

### The Coin Flip... Faith/Works

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (Jas.1:17).

There has been an age old temptation on the part of man to pit obedience to the word against the grace that Jesus manifested to us on the cross. The apostle Paul wanted to make this crystal clear... Christians need to understand about the forgiveness of sin, and that rightness with God is possible because God, by His grace, acted through Christ. Thus Paul wrote; "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ----- and this not from yourselves, it is

the gift from God----not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph.2:8). Does that imply that what those who confess Christ do is of no interest? Paul denied this in most vehement terms. If it were the case, we ought to go around sinning more and more so that there would be more and more grace, and Paul said "by no means" to that (Rom.6:2). James too, it seems, encountered those who wanted to pit obedience to God against the grace manifested on the cross. During the some 2,000 years since Paul and James lived, the subject has not died. When a believer says that what one does in response to the gospel is important, or that no one can continue to be a liar and expect to share in the kingdom of God, they inevitably hear the disgusted response, "there you go again! Don't you know that salvation is by grace, not by works?" To both James and Paul, salvation by grace through faith and salvation by works were not opposite sides of a coin ----- one of which had to be accepted and the other rejected.... God's grace through faith in Christ implies a readiness to repent, and repentance demands obedience to God... Lets make sure we get this.... Behavioral changes based on faith, are the works necessary for salvation! For those who understand the teachings of Christ and the apostles, works are a natural and necessary response and output to the gospel. No coin flip is needed....

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

06/27/2017  
Choices Of Words

"This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves to be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves" (Jas.1:19-22).

What James wanted his readers to know is that the way a person talks reflects on the type of individual he or she is. He give some advice that echoes through the corridors of time... Christians are to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. In today's world, this particular order seems to have been jumbled. How often, especially in stressful situations, do folks speak before they have had time to think over the words? Anger, instead of being last in this stream of advice, comes first. It results in sharp, unkind words, and James reminds us that that it sometimes works the other way around.... At times, our rash speaking can goad us toward anger. Here is the shame of it all... One's own words can cause someone to act in a way where the righteousness of God is nowhere to be seen. When James urges Christians to put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, I think the subject continued to be the vulgar speech of the street and workplace. James more than likely saw the same troubling trends in his world that we see in ours. Vulgarity tends to move from the streets into homes, and parents must struggle to teach their children that the words they choose color their disposition and habits. When comedians are devoid of imagination, when the ignorant cannot express themselves, when the sophisticated are grappling for something shocking to say, vulgarity is the common resort. The advice from James is in humility receive the word that is implanted.... In an over-simplification, we have to keep the words spoken by highway construction crews, out of our living rooms. The careful choice of words is a part of the obedience James expected from Christians.... How about you?

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

06/28/2017

Looking And Doing

"Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror, and after

looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it ---- he will be blessed in what he does" (Jas.1:23-25).

I have recently begun to read books by the author David McCullough. The books are historical and he does extensive research on the material he writes about. I also find his style of writing to be both informative, entertaining and engaging. Some folks approach the Bible in a similar fashion, content to hear and read it and even admire its style and content. McCullough's books, though enjoyable, do not change the way I speak or behave, and that's the unfortunate way that some people approach the Word of God. James, in today's verses, compares the Word to a man who looks at his image in a mirror and goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like... Such a person is simply a hearer of the Word, and not a doer. When the truth found in God's Word is read and acted upon, it acts as a mirror to reflect God's will for Christian living. Anyone who thoughtfully examines himself in the light of the perfect law of liberty, will call on himself to be a doer of the Word... Augustine of Hippo wrote this; "Love, then do as you wish." I believe that he had it right as long as love is molded by the teachings of Christ. Obedience to the law of love is not enforced by external power, but is stirred and impelled from within.... The perfection of the perfect law of liberty consists not only of its invitation to obey it, but also to embrace its precepts. The law is perfect when the Christian drinks it in and incorporates it into his very being. We become truly free people when we attain the wholeness and perfection of that perfect law.... Looking and doing....

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

06/29/2017

#### Pure And Simple Religion

"If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (Jas.1:26-27).

When we consider the situation in which his readers lived and the trials they faced, James focused his attention on three (3) basic things, that when considered together, he called pure and faultless religion.... None of these three things emphasizes abstract ideas such as faith, love and hope, even though they are important. James was the practical guy, and his emphasis was on Christian behavior. The three (3) things are; (1) keeping a tight rein on one's tongue, (2) visiting orphans and widows in their trouble, (3) keeping oneself from being polluted by the world.

Hmmmmmm... Now it seems like when we talk about Christianity that love, faith and hope always come to the forefront, and they should. James, on the other hand, looks for results. His big thing is all about what one does with their love, faith and hope. I think that he considered all three of these as what it means to be doers of the Word... Jesus emphasized that the beginning of the Christian journey revolves around things of the heart. James took the Lord's teachings to the next level. The heart of the Christian has not been engaged unless it is evident in one's behavior. James warned his readers that the world will do its best (actually its worst) to corrupt and pollute Christian behavior. Though he doesn't go into detail about the steps one must take to remain unpolluted, wisdom gleaned from experience or advice from others has much to teach. The world would like to stain us, and we must do our best to keep this from happening....

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

06/30/2017

## One Size Fits All

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, 'Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath' " (Matt. 12:1-2).

The sales idea that "one size fits all" was meant to infer that a particular product could be used under any circumstance by anyone. The term has even been extended to mean that one style or procedure would fit in all related applications. The Pharisees who confronted Jesus seemed to want a law to cover every possible choice a follower of God must make. They took the Law of Moses farther than it was intended to be taken, adding their own "traditions..." Jesus refused to allow these "self-styled" leaders to determine the specific ways in which believers were to apply the law. What Jesus did, as did James, was to call on folks to decide how love and faith were to be applied when they faced situations in their everyday life... In essence, the application of the law was more open-ended for Jesus than it was for the Pharisees. Let's take a look at today's verses as an example. Under normal circumstances, it was wrong to grind grain on the Sabbath, but under some instances, it was right. We all might want to read Matt. 12:1-7 to see how Jesus applied all of this.... James insisted that the law of liberty (Jas. 1:25) such as the one Jesus taught, did not mean that any kind of behavior was acceptable. Law had not been abandoned.... Jesus expected His followers to be doers of the law. The law of liberty that James wrote about was to be applied within the boundaries of what was acceptable behavior in the sight of the Lord, nothing more, nothing less.... The Christian life should be a morally upright one, making sure that one's words and actions are those that imitate Christ... I guess that one size fits all thing doesn't work all the time, does it....

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







