

10/01/2016  
Some Supernatural Journeys

Folks always seem to be interested in supernatural stuff and the are shows on TV about the paranormal. Today's quiz is about some supernatural things that have happened in the Bible...  
So don't get frightened now, and as always, have fun...

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which prophet traveled for 40 days on the strength from a cake and water? (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Hosea, (d) Obadiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Israel crossed the Red Sea and a river on dry ground. What river? (a) Pharpar, (b) Tigris, (c) Euphrates, (d) Jordan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. When Elijah outran a chariot for 10 miles from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel, who was the king? (a) Jeroboam, (b) Omri, (c) Ahab, (d) Jehu.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. How was Elijah taken up to heaven? (a) on a staircase, (b) in a whirlwind, (c) on some clouds, (d) by chariot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem? (a) Caiaphas, (b) Satan, (c) Annas, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. When Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan on dry land, what did Elijah strike the waters with? (a) his mantle, (a) a staff, (c) a branch, (d) his hand.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What carried Philip from Gaza to Azotus? (a) a flaming chariot, (b) a winged horse, (c) the Spirit of the Lord, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When Ezekiel was lifted by a spirit that held him between heaven and earth, what was the spirit holding on to? (a) his arm, (b) his hair, (c) a tether, (d) nothing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who was taken up into heaven in the sight of his followers? (a) Enoch. (b) Elisha, (c) Jesus, (d) Peter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What man knew someone who had been caught up to the 3rd heaven? (a) John, (b) Paul, (c) Peter, (d) Philip.

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

10/03/2016  
Death And Life With Lazarus

"Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord, and wiped His feet with her hair. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, 'Lord, the one you love is sick' " (Jn.11:1-3).

Five times in the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles after Him performed what one might call the ultimate miracle. This miracle was the raising up of someone who was dead... All five of those "raising's" were special and notable, but none command the time and space in our Bible as the bringing back of Lazarus from death. John is the only Gospel writer who records this miracle, and he alone indicates that it was a factor in the subsequent arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus. The scope and depth of this miracle are special for several reasons. Mary and Martha, his sisters, have already been introduced to us in the Bible, and he was their brother. From today's verses, (the one you love is sick) we find that he was a friend of Jesus. And lastly, by the time that Jesus got to Bethany, he had been dead for four days! No quibbling around here, he was really dead! When Jesus heard that His friend Lazarus was sick, He was on the east end of the Jordan, opposite Jericho. The threat of arrest had driven Him from Jerusalem to the area in which John the Baptist had preached several years earlier. His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem and ultimate arrest were just weeks away. Understandably, the disciples questioned the wisdom of making the move back toward Jerusalem where people were waiting to kill Him, but if Jesus was going that way, they were going with Him. Before leading them back, Jesus actually told them that Lazarus had died. It is against this backdrop that this wonderful miracle is accomplished. Jesus and the disciples risked a lot to go back... Sometimes, being a real Christian involves risk. The risk of losing old friends and even family members.. The risk of knowing that " non-Christian" behavior is no longer acceptable. The risk of knowing that more will be expected out of us in our new lives. Jesus took the risk, do we?

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Random Acts of Kindness should become Routine Acts of Kindness.... Love mark Phil.4:11

10/04/2016  
Jesus Wept

"Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews came to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him, but Mary stayed at home" (Jn.11:18-20).

All kinds of feelings and emotions are swirling around during the performing of this miracle. Martha and Mary were evidently well known, as many people came to comfort them. The two of them are those women of Lk.10:38-40, whose house Jesus taught in and give us that wonderful story. It still seems that Martha is the more practical of the pair, as she went out to greet Jesus. Both women, apart from one another said literally the same thing to Him... Martha said; "If you had been here, my brother would not have died..." ( V 21 ). Mary uttered exactly the same words when she came to meet Jesus a bit later. Jesus gave reassurance to them, and when He asked where they had laid Lazarus, they said come and see. Then we have the verse considered to be the shortest in the Bible. Though Jesus knew what had happened already, at this moment, His emotions got the best of Him anyway... "Jesus wept." ( V 35 ). For all of its grammatical simplicity, the verse is filled with unfathomable complexity. Jesus wept after speaking with Lazarus' grieving sisters, and seeing all the mourners. This alone seems to be enough to move Jesus to tears, except for the fact that He had come to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead... He knew that in a few short minutes that all this weeping would turn into astonished joy, and then tearful laughter, and then worship... So why the tears? Maybe it summed up Jesus' compassion for suffering. Maybe He wept over the calamity of sin... Maybe more likely, it was the cost of redemption he would shortly pay as the result of this miracle, as He knew that raising Lazarus would actually cause the religious leaders to finally take action to put Him to death. I believe that Jesus weeping for Lazarus gives us a glimpse of how God views our suffering and death. He hates the calamity that sin brings, and through Jesus, the cost of our redemption is paid in full... "Weeping may remain for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (Psa.30:5) "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain..." (Rev.21:4). Now that was a good cry...

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

10/05/2016  
Take Away The Stone

"But some of them said, 'Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind have kept this man from dying?' Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 'Take away the stone,' He said. 'But Lord,' said Martha, the sister of the dead man, 'by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days' " (Jn.11:37-39).

The other account involving Mary and Martha (Lk.10:38-42) shows Martha to be the practical of the two sisters. Those who reported that Jesus was in Bethany, came to Martha first. After she had run to meet Jesus and exchanged words, she then sent for her sister. Mary acted quickly and gave no thought to an inconspicuous departure. Those who were there comforting her thought she was going to the tomb to mourn, and followed her... When she got to Jesus, it was her tears that caused Jesus to groan and weep as we saw yesterday. There was now a crowd of folks at the cave, now a tomb where Lazarus was interred, and they found a large stone had

been laid in front of the entrance. As we see from today's verses, Jesus told them to take away the stone. Martha, the practical one, chimes in again, this time thinking about how bad her brother must have smelled after four days in the tomb. Jesus' response resonates through the corridors of time for each of us... "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God," ( V 40 ) were His words... Previously, in Jn.6:63, Jesus said this; "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.."

2,000 years ago, Jesus' words were the words of life. In 1874, Philip P. Bliss wrote a song entitled, "Wonderful Words of Life." "Sing them over again to me, Wonderful words of Life, Let me more of their beauty see, Wonderful words of life. Words of life a beauty, Teach me faith and duty; Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life; Beautiful words, Wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life." Fast-forward to 2016, and His words are still the words of life... Many, like Martha, don't get it right away, but we ought to... Lets just tell them to take away the stone and see the glory of God...

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

10/06/2016  
Life For The Dead

"And when He had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go' " (Jn11:43-44).

As they stood before the tomb of Lazarus, Martha and Jesus were thinking on two different planes... She was resigned in the acceptance of her brother's death, while Jesus on the other hand, knew the limitations of death when He was involved. As the Son of God, He had an opportunity laying right before Him. He saw the potential to be compassionate and to show the power of God at the same time... While Martha said, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days," Jesus calls upon her to have a greater faith. He still calls on us the same way today... Some presumably strong men pushed the stone away from the cave's opening, and Jesus looked skyward with these words; "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me" ( V 41 ). Jesus wanted none of the witnesses to have any doubts about what was to unfold here. For emphasis, He said the next words "in a loud voice, Lazarus, come out!" Just imagining this scene is almost surreal to me... How about you? Those who had come with Mary to the tomb may have shared a condescending look with one another. While some may have looked away, some eyes may have been transfixed on the cave opening, not knowing what would happen next... A four day old corpse came out of the cave alive, his movements restricted by the linen strips, and Jesus' words ringing in their ears... "Take off the grave clothes and let him go..." Chills must have gone up and down spines, and jaws must have dropped... I get that way just thinking about it. You and I truly serve a Savior who is the Son of

God. Jesus showed His ultimate power, that being the power over death, and He will show it again to each of us one day. Physical death will come to all of us, but we will live with Him forever... Its spine tingling and jaw dropping...

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

10/07/2016

Aquila and Priscilla - Private Tutors

"Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though only knew the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him into their home and explained the way of the Lord more accurately" (Acts 18:24-26).

When the apostle Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, traveled with him. On one occasion, as stated in today's verses, they met a bright and eloquent man named Apollos, teaching in a synagogue. Apollos was from Alexandria, Egypt, a city that was generally thought to be the seat of learning in the world, that also had a large Jewish population. He was a powerful speaker, and taught about Jesus. He had a problem, however, in that his knowledge was only partial. He only knew of the baptism of John and not of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection... At this point in time, baptism was done as apart of the salvation process, and not just for repentance alone. Priscilla and Aquila didn't confront him before everyone, where they could have accused him of teaching error. Instead, they used tact and diplomacy. They called him aside and into their home where they explained the way of the Lord more accurately. Apollos had private tutors... This is a good lesson for all of us concerning the sharing of God's Word with others. As the salt of the earth and light of the world, we are required to do this sharing. The spirit in which we do our witnessing can have a huge influence on its effect. We ought to be bold, but not boorish..... Sincere but not dogmatic... Paul explained it to Timothy like this; "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim.2:15). If we read the rest of Acts 18, we'll find how Priscilla and Aquila's teaching worked. Apollos became an even greater ambassador for the Lord, and it was all because he had really good private tutors.

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

10/08/2016

Wonders Of Elijah And Elisha

So many really cool things happened during the lives of Elijah and Elisha, that I thought a quiz about them would be fun... If you're like Jane, you mix them up... Sorry.... As always, have fun.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. What happened to the kids that made fun of Elisha's bald head? (a) their mom's punished them, (b) they ran away, (c) 2 bears mauled them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What did the bones of Elisha in his tomb do to a dead man who was thrown in? (a) disintegrated him, (b) brought him back to life, (c) gave him his own tomb.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What did Elisha do to make an axe head float? (a) blew on the water, (b) threw in a stick, (c) waved a rod, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who was healed of leprosy when he followed Elisha's instructions? (a) a widow, (b) a young boy, (c) Naaman, (d) Elijah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who appeared with Jesus and Elijah on the Mt. of Transfiguration? (a) Moses, (b) Elisha, (c) Abraham, (d) Teddy Roosevelt.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. What birds fed Elijah in the wilderness? (a) ravens, (b) doves, (c) eagles, (d) quail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What did Elisha do to make the poisoned stew edible? (a) spit in it, (b) threw in a stick, (c) added water, (d) put in some flour.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What happened to the Syrian soldiers when Elijah prayed? (a) they died, (b) they were blinded, (c) they ran away, (d) they put down their weapons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Who conceived a son after Elisha predicted she would? (a) his wife, (b) Elijah's sister, (c) a Shunammite woman, (d) Hanna.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. How did Elisha purify the bitter water? (a) stuck his finger in it, (b) waved a rod, (c) threw in some salt, (d) it doesn't say.

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

10/10/2016  
Healing At The pool

"One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, 'Do you want to get well?' 'Sir,' the invalid replied, 'I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked" (Jn.5:5-9).

As we do a few devotionals about the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda, we find Jesus headed into Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feast days. The pool at Bethesda had an interesting history... "For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted" ( V 4 NAS ). John wrote that around the pool were 5 colonnaded porticos that provided a shade from the sun. Sitting and lying under these porticos were a host of sick folks who believed in its curative powers. It is against this backdrop, that Jesus, the real healing power came along... I just want to note here that not all Bible translations, like the NIV for example, include the stirring of the water by an angel of the Lord part. You might want to check your version this morning... These verses, if present, require one to believe that God arbitrarily sent an angel on some occasions for a "random healing." Such a thing might be possible, but God does not heal in such a fashion elsewhere... Whether fact, or a stretching of the truth, many people believed in it. I find it especially interesting that the miracle started with this question from Jesus; "Do you want to get well?" When someone comes to Jesus in belief, He poses that same question to them. When people become Christians, they take advantage of the opportunity to get well... The infirmity is the life of sin they were once in. The healing is the grace, forgiveness, freedom from guilt and salvation, that comes only from knowing the Lord. No pool.... No stirring waters.... Just Jesus, the healer.

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

10/11/2016  
What's Your Sign?

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.' At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked." (Jn.5:8-9).

In this Gospel, John offers an explanation for why Jesus chose this particular man to benefit from His kindness and power. The man was not a total invalid, but had been impaired for many years. He was able to get around some, but it was slow and awkward for him to move. As Jesus' compassion had moved Him to heal others, He approached the man with this question; "Do you want to be made well?" The man's response was wrapped around the superstition involved with the swirling waters of the pool at Bethesda. It would seem that it's magical power only worked for one healing at a time and he was too slow to be the first one in... Jesus

dismissed the powers of the waters in the pool. It was He, the Son of God, the giver of life, who had the power to heal. God does not dole out life and healing by means of superstitious magic, but reveals Himself by means of the authority He gives to the Son... At Jesus command, Get up! Pick up your mat and walk, that the miracle took place. Jesus gives absolutely no credence to the pool's magical powers, thus immediately, strength returned to the man's legs. He folded up the mat he had been confined to for many years and walked away with no visible limp. Lets look at one quick side note here... The miracle was done on the Sabbath. Unfortunately, the Jewish leaders had translated the Law in such a skewed way, that healing on this day was considered to be work. If this was work, so was the carrying away of his mat by the cured man. Do I catch a hint of superstition here? We live today in a world that is still controlled by the Lord. No tarot cards, tea leaves, horoscopes, happenstance or karma should ever be brought into the equation. A. W. Dicus wrote the words to one of our hymns in 1966, and they go like this..."There is, beyond the azure blue, a God, concealed from human sight. He tinted skies with heavenly hue and framed the worlds with His great might. There is a God, He is alive, In Him we live, and we survive; From dust our God created man, He is our God, The great I AM."

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

10/12/2016

A Response To Grace And Kindness

"Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, 'See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.' The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who made him well." (Jn.5:14-15).

As the miracle of this healing continues, the man who was healed carried his mat through the streets of Jerusalem as Jesus had directed, but this posed a dilemma. Oyyyyyyy! It was the Sabbath, and the Jewish officials had determined that carrying one's mat, even though he had no choice was work, and the man was in violation of the Law.... When questioned about his behavior, the man responded, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk' " ( V 11 ). Furthermore, when asked about who it was that healed him, he had no idea, as Jesus had slipped into the crowd. In today's verses, Jesus encounters the healed man again at the temple. I guess by word of mouth, the man now knew who had healed him, but he did not seem to be the least bit grateful... Something bigger is going on here. In the 9th chapter of John, when Jesus healed the blind man, he repudiates the idea that the man was blind because of his or his parent's sins. Here, he says, stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. What we may conclude here by Jesus' words are that this does not mean that they are never caused by sin, but there is even a bigger issue.... The eternal consequences of sin might be more serious than any physical ailment. Lets get to today's lesson.... When the blind man of chapter nine was healed, be concluded that only One who came from God could do this miracle. Today's verse says that this guy had a totally different response to the kindness and power of



Jesus... He went to the Jews and ratted on Him. How do each of us respond to the grace and kindness of Jesus? Have we been Christians for so long that we take it for granted? I suggest that we wake up each day and greet it as a chance to glorify our Lord... I might also recommend that we give thanks in our prayers every day for His constant care. If we are to do any ratted, lets rat to others about the wonderful Savior we serve....

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

10/13/2016  
The Great Eacape

"How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? A salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Heb.2:3).

The Great Escape is an epic 1963 American World War II movie based on British Commonwealth soldiers attempt to escape from a German POW camp during the war. It is a wonderfully done movie that has many great stars in it. As we complete Jesus' miracle of the healing of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda, we glean an important lesson... It is that all people do not respond in the same way to the gracious gifts that God has to offer. The greatest of those gifts is found in today's verse from the Book of Hebrews. Some respond in gratitude and obedience, while others become even more entrenched in sin than they were before. John may have intentionally recorded this healing of the lame man at the Bethesda pool in an effort to compare it to the healing of the blind man in chapter 9. Simply put, the blind man believed and obeyed, while the lame man reported Jesus to those who wanted to kill Him. His faith had nothing to do with the miracle. When Jesus, in The Sermon On The Mount, tried to gets folks to love their enemies, He said these words; "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous..." (Matt.5:45). In addition to material blessings, God sent a Savior, Christ the Lord. Like the lame man, many benefit from God's blessings but turn their backs when the Lord calls on them for a response of faith and obedience. The wise would do well to listen to Jesus' warning to the lame man, as there is a worse fate that awaits an unbeliever than just a physical ailment. That is exactly why the writer of the Book of Hebrews asks the sobering question we see in today's verse... The question is one that all who benefit from the Lord's gracious gifts would do well to consider. It is about The Great Escape...

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

10/14/2016  
Tychicus - A Trusty Traveler

"Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me. I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that he may know your circumstance and comfort your hearts." (Col.4:7-8).

If you are a casual Bible reader, you might be wondering this... "Whose this Tychicus guy?" If you would like to pursue it a bit farther, he is mentioned just four times in the Bible, all in letters from the apostle Paul. They are; Eph.6:21-22, 2 Tim.4:2, Titus 3:12... Paul wrote the letter we know as Colossians while he was in prison at Rome, so obviously, Tychicus was with him at the writing of today's verses. For someone we know very little about, Tychicus embodies some pretty impressive characteristics... Lets see... He's a beloved brother... a faithful minister... a fellow servant... a comforter... Would you agree that this is a rather impressive resume? My title today also indicates that Tychicus did some traveling, no mean feat in those days. Timothy was at Ephesus, and Titus was on the island of Crete. If you have a Bible map, you might want to check those journeys out. So why would a bring up someone who is not very well known and write a devotional about him? Just how many folks that one might consider to be to be "not very well known" have played an important part in our lives. As you ponder, can you think of a few?

Here's what I like about Tychicus. Its not that he didn't do a lot, but rather it is about his contentment in serving God without any recognition or fanfare. He seemed to be satisfied with helping Paul in any way he could as brother, minister, servant and comforter. Its safe to say that without people like Tychicus, and other trustworthy people, that the efforts of Paul and other church leaders would have been far less effective. I don't think that has changed today.... Maybe this obscure guy might be a wonderful role model for each of us. A humble servant, just quietly doing his daily work for the Lord...

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

10/15/2016  
Houses Of Worship

Today's quiz is all about houses of worship. I hope that you will be able to test your Bible memory and answer them. As always, have fun....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Which goddess had a famous temple in the city of Ephesus? (a) Rubiciuos, (b) Athena, (c) Diana, (d) Hera.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Who received a vision of the Jerusalem temple while he was in exile in Babylon? (a) Daniel, (b) Ezekiel, (c) Meshach, (d) Ezra.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. According to Paul, who is called the temple of God? (a) those who tithe, (b) believers, (c) Jews, (d) churches.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What Assyrian emperor was assassinated by his own sons while worshipping in his pagan temple? (a) Sennacherib, (b) Darius, (c) Cyrus, (d) Xerxes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Who was told in a vision to measure the temple in Jerusalem? (a) Paul, (b) Daniel, (c) John, (d) Clydeous.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Who carried away the furnishings from the Jerusalem temple and put them in the temple at Babylon? (a) Darius, (b) Cyrus, (c) Ezekiel, (d) Nebuchadnezzar.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. What holy object was taken by the Philistines and put in their temple, causing Dagon's image to fall?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Who built the 1st temple in Jerusalem? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hiram.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. What king built a temple for Baal in Samaria? (a) Zimri, (b) Ahab, (c) Omri, (d) I made this up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. What king issued an order allowing the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem? (a) Darius, (b) Xerxes, (c) Cyrus, (d) Nebuchadnezzar.

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

10/17/2016

Onesimus And Philemon

"Therefore, although in Christ I could be bold and order you to do what you ought to do, yet I appeal to you on the basis of love..." (Philemon 8-9).

This week's devotionals will come from Book of Philemon. The apostle Paul probably wrote this letter at the same time that he wrote Colossians, about A.D 60. It was sent to Philemon and the church at Colosse with the same travelers, Onesimus and Tychicus. Slavery was a common practice in those days... "Masters, provide you slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col.4:1). Onesimus was a slave, who had apparently stolen some money from his master Philemon, and run away. Under Roman law, he could be put to death. But Onesimus met Paul in Rome, and through his ministry became a Christian. He is now willing to return to his master, and the Book of Philemon is a personal appeal to ask that he be accepted as a Christian brother. To win his friend Philemon's willing acceptance, Paul writes tactfully. It is a good lesson for us in dealing with people on a daily

basis. Honey works a lot better than vinegar when it comes to getting along with people. It also works when we are trying to share our faith with them. If people don't view us as happy and contented in our own skin, why would they want to make a change? Paul even injects a bit on humor in the form of a pun in verse eleven... The name Onesimus was a common name back then, and it means "useful..." Verse eleven reads; "Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and me." I wish I could write like this... The appeal is wonderfully organized in such a way as to build rapport, persuade the mind and move the emotions. The name Onesimus is not even mentioned until the rapport has been built. (Vs.10) I hope that we will glean a few important nuggets from our study this week. Its a great read, so why don't you get into it today...

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

10/18/2016  
For Love's Sake

"He (Tychicus) is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you" (Col.4:9) "Yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you ----- since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and also now a prisoner of Christ Jesus" (Phil.9).

Make no mistake, slavery was a abhorrent back in the days of Paul as it is today. It was, however, as much a part of daily life in the Greco-Roman world as cars, Walmarts and airplanes are to us today... No one ---- not secular moralists, and not New Testament writers ---- questioned its legitimacy. As far back as historians can look, slavery existed. Abraham owned slaves, among them Hagar, who bore him a son. For Paul, Philemon or other 1st century Christians to have set out to rid the world of slavery would have been a hopeless undertaking. They did not choose this as a battle, but worked within the system by saying this; "Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you have a Master in heaven" (Col.4:1). Paul appeals to Philemon on the behalf of Onesimus on the highest of levels... "Yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you..." One cannot act on any higher plane than that of love. You and I today, no less than the ancient ones we are reading about, live with the immorality and injustice of the world... Believers respond by teaching and practicing kindness and self-control. We don't give up because we cannot effect "ideal justice and goodness" among people.... Its hard to change folks who Paul describes in his letter to the church a Philippi this way; "Their destiny is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame..." (3:19). It is as true for Christians today as it was for Paul, Onesimus and Philemon back then. Christians cannot do everything to change the world, but they can do something.

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

10/19/2016  
A Beloved Brother

"Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good ----- no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord" (Phil.15).

I see the apostle Paul dealing with the evil of slavery here by appealing to the best qualities of Philemon, who was a high caliber guy to begin with. The church at Colosse, after all, was meeting in his home. At this time, Paul was a shaker and mover in the church, and as an apostle could have actually made a command to Philemon, but instead chose to plead. Paul placed himself between Philemon the master and Onesimus the slave, and he bargained, using their friendship as collateral. Interesting enough, Paul could have acted as a lawyer and cited the Law of Moses to keep Onesimus with him in Rome... "You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you... He shall live with you in your midst..." (Deut.23:15). Paul set aside his own feelings and deferred to Philemon, but he did so in such a manner that the slave-holder would have trouble making any decision other than to treat Onesimus with compassion... There are so many lessons here for us about the way we ought to treat one another, and they even spill over into the way we treat those who we witness to. Paul walked a fine line. A person might become resentful if it appears that he or she has only one choice, but that might be construed as a hollow victory. The real triumph in this epic story would be for Philemon to decide to do the right thing. Paul urged his brother Philemon to receive back his slave with the same grace and joy he would have used were the apostle himself present. Why? Because both Onesimus and Paul were his beloved brothers. Look around you at your beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, and be sure that you are treating them with the grace, joy and dignity that is shown in this story...

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

10/20/2016  
Who Owns Whom?

"If you then regard me as a partner, accept him as you would me. But if he has wronged in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this letter with my own hand, I will repay it (not to mention to you that you owe to me even your own self as well). Yes, brother, Let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ" (Phil.17-20).

Lets complete our study of the Book of Philemon today. Already in verse eleven, Paul had conceded that Onesimus had been "unprofitable" for Philemon, but the apostle insisted that he was now "profitable" to both of them. I guess that this is what my title today is all about... Paul

did not use a form of the word in Onesimus' name in verse eleven, but the sense was very close. Onesimus had lived up to his name which meant "useful." As Paul's letter to Philemon comes to an end, he did incorporate a verb into his appeal that drew on the same root as the name Onesimus... As we use a couple of Bible translations, this may become more clear. The NKJV translates Verse 20 this way; "Let me have joy from you." The ASV (which I used today) gets closer: "Let me benefit from you..." If we paraphrase this, Paul might actually be asking this: "Will you, Philemon, be as useful to me as you slave Onesimus has been?" Lets make no mistake here, Paul has hinted that when Onesimus ran away, he had taken some money from his owner. Paul's response? "But if he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account." Paul is not running up a tab here but he indicates that more is at stake than a bag of silver coins... Under Roman law Philemon owned Onesimus. We get to a deeper issue here, as Philemon is left to ponder what Paul has really done for him. Philemon owed Paul his fullness of life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. We get to a wonderful lesson here... Philemon is both owner and owned. Isn't that the way we are today as Christians? Of course we feel that we "own" the few years that we have here on earth, but what about the bigger picture? When as believers, we take on the Lord though our obedience to Him, doesn't He actually own us? With that ownership, God has expectations about how we will live our lives... Its all about our service to Him manifested through our service of others... So.... Who Owns Whom?

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

10/21/2016

Epaphroditus: Brother, Worker, Soldier

"But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to me to take care of my needs" (Phil.2:25)..

Epaphroditus was one of those rather obscure Bible figures. He is mentioned on only two occasions, both in the Book of Philippians. From one of the accounts we find that he got very sick, had a brush with death, but got better. He also served as a messenger between the apostle Paul and the church at Philippi. To put that into perspective, the distance between Rome where Paul was and Philippi was 700 to 1,200 miles, depending on the route. It would include both land and sea travel and might take from six weeks to three months. When the Philippian church found that Paul was in need and a prisoner at Rome, they got together a large gift to send him, probably including money. The person they chose with not only this responsibility, but to take care of Paul, was Epaphroditus... He was trusted enough to do this very important and difficult job, and by looking at today's verse, he did it well... He not only delivered the gift, but was a gift himself in the way he ministered to Paul. When Paul describes the gifts the Philippian church sent in the 4th chapter, he does so like this; "I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an

acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (4:18-19). Even through a horrible sickness, Epaphroditus did something great, something meaningful and something in service. It would be wonderful to think that if we serve the Lord, that we would receive gifts of prosperity and good health, but it may not work out that way. What we do know is that God will not only comfort us in our infirmities, but will supply us with brothers and sisters in Him to do the same. Epaphroditus is a great example for all of us. He battled and persevered to become Paul's brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier. He served both Paul and the church at Philippi... So.... How are we doing in this area? The Bible always provides us with lessons on being good people and servants.... Lets follow the example.

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

10/22/2016

### Who Asked God This Question?

Today's quiz is about questions asked of God by various people in the Bible. I'll be using the ASV for the questions... As always, have fun....

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "Why has my pain been perpetual and my wound incurable?" (hint: a prophet) (a) Ezekiel, (b) Jeremiah, (c) Isaiah, (d) Hosea.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. "So \_\_\_\_\_ inquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go and attack these Philistines?' " (hint: a king) (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Josiah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. "Am I my brother's keeper?" (no hint necessary)
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. "Far be it from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (hint: a patriarch) (a) Abraham, (b) Isaac, (c) Jacob, (d) Noah.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh?" (a) Aaron, (b) Joseph, (c) Moses, (d) Clydious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. "I fell on my face and cried out in a loud voice, 'Alas, Lord God! Will you bring the remnant of Israel to a complete end' " (hint: a prophet) (a) Isaiah, (b) Ezra, (c) Ezekiel, (d) Daniel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. "Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to you?" (hint: a righteous man) (a) Noah, (b) Moses, (c) Joshua, (d) Job.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. "O Lord my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying?" (hint: a prophet) (a) Elijah, (b) Elisha, (c) Habakkuk, (d) Malachi.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge your people, to discern between good and evil." (hint: a king) (a) Hezekiah, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Manassas.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." (hint: a leader) (a) Aaron, (b) Joshua, (c) Abraham, (d) Moses.

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

10/24/2016  
Hey Jude

"Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James, To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ: Mercy and peace and love be yours in abundance" (Jude 1-3).

This week, our devotionals will come from the short letter written by someone named Jude. Sorry, but I could just not resist the title... The devotionals will revolve around several aspects of the book including: 1. Who wrote it, 2. Why was it written, 3. Why is it an important part of the Bible. We can be almost positive that the letter was written by Jude (short for Judas or Judah) who was the half-brother of Jesus. He identifies himself as a brother of James, who was also one of Jesus' half-brothers. Sometimes it takes time for folks, even family, to come around. The mother and brothers of Jesus received scant attention between His baptism and His crucifixion.

At one time (Mk.3:21) they were so concerned about Him that they thought He had lost His mind, and came to rescue Him from the crowds.(Mk.3:31-32). The apostle John writes this; "For even His brothers did not believe in Him" (7:5). Mary, Jesus mother, was with Him to the end, standing with others near the cross when Jesus was crucified. Something interesting to note at the crucifixion is that Jesus committed the care of His mom into the hands of John the apostle, not her own family. The wonderful thing to notice in the big picture, is how things can change for the good. Jesus' brother, James, mentioned in today's verse, is not only His sibling, but the author of the Epistle of James. There's more... "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me" (Gal.2:9). The apostle Paul writes here that James was one of the pillars of the early church in Jerusalem. I believe that the first valuable lesson we get from Jude is that we are not judged by the way we start, but how we grow and mature. It took Jesus' brothers a while to come around, but they certainly did. Our "real lives" begin with our belief and obedience to the message of hope found in the Lord. He then expects us, like His brothers, to grow and mature...



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

10/25/2016  
Jude's Warning

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Back in the days when we actually wrote letters to one another, do you remember starting a letter with one intention, only to have something important come up that you had to address. It was as if the words just flew off your pen as thoughts came into your head. It would seem that Jude may have wanted to write a "warm and fuzzy" letter about salvation, only to realize that there were important issues he had to get across that were of great importance... Lets take a look at verse four... "For certain men have crept unnoticed, who long ago were marked for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" Wow! I'm not exactly sure what marked for condemnation long ago means though it may have had to do with their gross sins. What we can figure out is that they are perverting the wonderful Gospel message. I don't have enough space to explain

Gnosticism here, but in a nutshell they made a terrible mistake about God's grace. Their assumption was that because of grace, people had the license to sin without restraint. Their rationale? They felt that God in His grace will freely forgive all these sins, or because sin, by contrast, magnifies the grace of God. Contending earnestly for the faith is important to each of us today, because our salvation depends upon it. The Bible is our guidebook to righteous living. We cannot pervert its teachings to suit our behavior, but rather we must tailor our behavior to its teachings. Jude's warnings ring down through the ages to us, because there are certainly many false teachings out there that might try to lure us in some way. Pray each day that the Lord's Word becomes a part of our fiber...

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

10/26/2016  
A Description

"But dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, 'In the last days there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.' These are men who will divide you, who will follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit" (Jude 17-19).

I will throw a challenge at you today as our devotional begins, to read both Jude and 2 Peter. A close comparison will show us that the churches they addressed were facing similar problems.

Who knows, they may have even conferred with one another and picked some of the same wording to warn the churches, No less than fifteen (15) of Jude's twenty five (25) verses have significant parallels in 2 Peter.... They even used the same illustrations in their deriding of those false teachers. In verse sixteen (16), after describing the despicable character of those teachers, Jude appeals to teaching churches in today's verses. He makes an appeal for them to follow the apostle's teachings, even using himself as the conduit through which the truth had first come to them. After this background material, lets get to today's lesson. For Jude, the apostle's teachings were authoritative! People were to be defined as people of God by what they believed and how they lived. Has anything changed today? When we want to make a statement that we truly believe in, we might finish it by saying that "it matters..." Jude said to them and us that both doctrine and morality matter...Unfortunately, both of them might get stretched and compromised to intolerable degrees. At this point, the term "Christian" no longer applies. If churches continued within the framework of false teaching(s), their relationship to Christ and the hope they have in Him is placed in serious jeopardy. Sometimes it is necessary to be warned of danger, and the description that Jude makes here is important to all of us today...

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

10/27/2016  
A Strong Finish

"But you, dear friends, build yourself up in the most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourself in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. 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 20-24).

Jude's letter is so well constructed. He greeted positively in the early part and admonished them to reject those false teachers who would destroy the church in the body of the letter. Then comes the "strong finish..." Jude now becomes the exhorter and encourager. We can even break down his exhortations numerically; (1) build yourselves up in the most holy faith, (2) pray fervently in the Holy Spirit, (3) keep yourselves in God's love, (4) wait anxiously for the mercy of Jesus Christ. All four of those exhortations are relevant to us today. As helpful as sermons and Bible classes may be, each Christian is responsible for his or her personal growth. No one can build either faith or faithfulness for one another, and prayer is more than something hastily said before a meal... "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express" (Rom.8:26). We are to speak to God from the heart, and that ought to involve the meditation of

the Spirit... If our relationship with the Lord is strong, we won't succumb to false teachings and fleshly temptations. Finally, there is that wonderful hope. Christians then and today live each day in the expectation of Jesus' return... Finally, with a really strong finish, Jude exhorts us to help others along the way. Perhaps no where in the Bible are these sentiments expressed more strongly than Jude does in verse 23-24... He urges believers to have compassion and to teach the truth to those lost in sin... We're to love the lost (love the sinner) but hate even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh (hate the sin)... Now is that a strong finish or what?

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

10/28/2016

What Made Demas Leave?

"Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica" (2 Tim.4:9-10).

A man named Demas is remembered in a negative way because of one short verse that is found in 2 Timothy. He is mentioned before (Col.4:12-14 & Philemon 23-24) in a more positive light, but 2 Timothy is the last epistle written by the apostle Paul, so he did not end well. We can conjecture on why Demas deserted Paul, but it would just that. Maybe in trying to figure out why he might have left, will give us some insight into why people desert their faith today. Let me offer a possibility... "Do not love the world or nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but it is from the world" (1 Jn.2:15-16).

These three things tie in very neatly with Gen.3:1-6, as the serpent tempts Eve... Lust of the flesh? "The woman saw that the tree was good for food" Lust of the eyes? "It was a delight to the eyes" Pride of life? "The tree was desirable to make one wise" (Gen.3:6). When sin creeps into our lives, it picks away at what we know is right. It makes us question, wonder and rationalize... What it was about the present world that made Demas give up his faith and desert Paul, we will never completely know, but this we can be fairly certain of... He didn't just wake up one morning and decide to turn away from God... Little by little, he must have gotten too close to that "black hole" of sin, and got sucked up in it. I guess to insure that we don't turn out like Demas, we've got to avoid those things about the present world that would suck us in. Those are the things that might tempt us to spend more time with them than with God...

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

10/29/2016

Miracles Of Jesus

Its only right after a series of devotionals about the miracles of Jesus, that I would give a quiz about them.... How sneaky of me... As always, have fun.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. How was the woman with the issue of blood healed? (a) He pronounced it, (b) she touched his garment, (c) He waved his hand, (d) it doesn't say.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What woman got up and started doing housework after Jesus healed her of a fever? (a) Peter's mother-in-law, (b) woman of Nain, (c) Samaritan woman, (d) Rubious.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. What unproductive tree did Jesus wither by cursing it? (a) fig tree, (b) sycamore tree, (c) pecan tree, (d) pomegranate tree.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Who appeared with Jesus at the transfiguration? (a) Abraham & Moses, (b) Moses & Aaron, (c) Moses & Elijah, (d) Elijah & Elisha.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. What disciple(s) did Jesus call after giving an enormous catch of fish? (a) Peter, (b) James, (c) John, (d) all three of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Whom did Jesus send to catch a fish that had a coin in its mouth? (a) John, (b) James, (c) Peter, (d) all three of them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The man Jesus healed at Bethsaida said people looked like what? (a) blurs, (b) weeds, (c) trees walking, (d) spaghetti strands.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. What widow had her son brought back to life by Jesus? (a) widow of Nain, (b) Anna, (c) Darvis, (d) there was none.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Why did people complain after Jesus healed a woman who had been stooped for 18 years. (a) she was a Samaritan, (b) she started limping, (c) He did it on the Sabbath, (d) she wasn't really stooped.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. When Jesus healed the demon possessed mute man, what did the Pharisees accuse Him of? a) healing a Gentile, (b) doing it on the Sabbath, (c) doing it wrong, (d) having demonic power.

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

"And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment ---- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ" (Eph.1:9-10).

More than likely, most of have taken a long trip by car. After a while, the car seems to become our own little self-contained home. We pass the time by talking with one another or listening to music, and reach for the snacks and drinks we have brought along. The apostle Paul was kind of in that car when he wrote the Book of Ephesians and under "house arrest," handcuffed to a soldier. He did not let his confinement define who or what he was however, as he churned out the wonderful letter that we know as the Book of Ephesians. Though his wrist was chained and his body was confined, his heart and mind inhabited eternity. "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ..." (Eph.1:4-5a). He peered back before the creation of the world, in verse four, and then on to the fullness of time in verse ten. "To be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment...." He did all of this while living his life in the present. Unfortunately, our vision gets blurred when compared to Paul's, if we allow ourselves to slip into a preoccupation with our own little petty affairs of life. We must see time in light of our past commitment, all the way through to our future perfection...If we could share the apostle's "broad perspective," we would live a life of praise... If we just realize that Paul did all of this while imprisoned, just think of what we could do. Our life would become worship, as we would constantly seek to please God for having blessed us so richly in Jesus Christ...

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