

10/01/08

1 Corinthians 11:31

SET FOR YOURSELF A HIGH STANDARD

In today's text, Paul is exhorting the Corinthians to judge themselves before God does it. That's a practice you and I need to be doing as well, because if we set for ourselves a high standard of excellence, we'll constantly have a reference point that measures our spiritual progress, or our spiritual regression. If we set for ourselves a high standard of excellence which we hold ourselves to, God will never have to judge us because we've already done it to ourselves. And, it's also important to realize and remember that these standards are PERSONAL, not public. These are standards of behavior and life style that you and God know about, and that's it. Other people don't need to know what standards you set for yourself, unless you see fit to tell them.

You see, it doesn't really matter if others know of these self-imposed standards or not, it's enough for us to know that we know and God knows. These are standards set, established and regulated by God's Word, using verses, statements and promises that the Holy Spirit has quickened to our hearts personally. So in one sense your standards of excellence could be the same as someone else's because we're all reading the same Bible, but in another sense, they are very personal to you because no two people are alike. And even though you could be standing on the same verse as someone else for your personal standards of behavior and excellence, how that truth applies to you, and you use it to judge yourself is as unique as you are in Christ! Each of us are very aware of our strengths, and our weaknesses, so even though our standards of excellence are derived from God's Word, they become extremely personal because we're applying them to our personal, private lives in ways that don't apply or pertain to others. In that way, you use God's Word to set personal and private standards that you chose to hold yourself to, whether anyone else does or not. Have you established any sort of behavioral "checklist"? Have you set any kind of self-imposed standard to measure your growth by? If not, it's important you do that, and do it as quickly as you can. It will help you monitor your life and keep you heading in the right direction for God.

10/02/08

Job 1:8

HOW WOULD GOD DESCRIBE YOU?

In yesterday's verse-a-day, we talked about the importance of establishing a personal standard of excellence that you hold yourself to. A standard that is private, something between you and God. Beginning with today's verse-a-day, I'm going to share with you some of the standards I've tried to set for myself over the years, and perhaps the Holy Spirit will encourage you to adopt some of them for yourself as well. Remember, even though we're looking at the same verses, how you apply them and how they pertain to you will always be a unique thing, that's why they're personal goals even when using the same verses!

When people talk about Job, too many times they emphasize the mistakes Job made. Well, he did make some mistakes to be sure, but at the beginning of the book, God describes Job in a way that I would like to be described also. This is my first personal goal, my first standard of excellence I try to hold myself to. With God's help, I want God to be able to describe me the same way He described Job to the devil. What did He say about Job? He told the devil, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in all the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" Wow! What a description! And what a goal to set for yourself! For God to speak to my enemies and describe me like that would be absolutely wonderful! And therefore, that's a goal I've set for myself. I'd like to live my life in such a way that this is how He would describe me if He were talking to the devil about me. How about you? Could God speak about you in this manner? I know in my own life, there have been many times when I knew God couldn't speak of me in this fashion, but at least it's a goal, and as I said yesterday, a

reference point that I can keep coming back to. We'll talk more about this in tomorrow's verse-a-day.

10/03/08

Job 1:8 NONE LIKE HIM IN ALL THE EARTH!

Yesterday, we began to look at God's description of Job, found in today's verse-a-day. We're looking at statements which God has made which we can set as a personal standard of excellence which we hold ourselves to. Can God talk about you the same way He talked about Job to the devil? Maybe not, but it's a great goal to set for yourself, a high standard of excellence to strive to attain and hold onto. This is the first personal goal I've set for myself, and I encourage you to do the same in your life. I want God to describe me like Job to my enemy the devil. I want God to say that as far as I'm concerned, and as far as my life as His son and servant is concerned, I want to be described like Job, **NONE LIKE HIM IN ALL THE EARTH!** Wow! What a great statement! Of course, Job made mistakes, and fell prey to the sin of fear and momentarily unbelief, but who hasn't? I sure have, and so have you! But remember, these are standards we set for ourselves as goals, knowing we won't always hit the mark, but at least we judge ourselves by a standard these statements set for us. At least we have a reference point to judge our lives by.

Notice how God described Job. Not only was he called a man with no equal in all the earth in terms of loyalty and service to God, but he was also called **PERFECT, UPRIGHT**, a man who **FEARS GOD** and **HATES EVIL**. The word "perfect" means **MATURE**, and the word "upright" means **RIGHTEOUS**. So, Job was mature and righteous, and a man who hated evil as much as he feared and revered God. So much so that there was none like him in all the earth! Now that's a goal worth shooting for! Have I failed God, and failed to live up to my standards of excellence? Yes I have, many times. But thank God, that's what His mercy is new every morning for! And thank God, I've asked for His mercy many times over the years because of the dumb things done or said, but you know what? He's **ALWAYS** given it when I've asked for it! Oh alleluia! Praise the Lord forevermore! No, we not trying to set for ourselves a standard of **PERFECTION**, but rather, a standard of lifestyle that helps us stay on track, and on target for the work of the Lord while here on earth. Are we perfect? In our spirits, yes, but in our daily lives, lived out from these dead-to-sin bodies, no! But my friend, when you have standards of excellence like these to strive towards, you'll be judging yourself long before God ever has to come along to do it, and that's a good thing. That's what Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11:31. If we judge ourselves, we won't be judged by God!

10/04/08

Matthew 3:17 CAN GOD DESCRIBE YOU LIKE JESUS?

We're looking at verses in the Bible which help us to set high standards of excellence which we hold ourselves to. First, we looked at God's statement to the devil about Job, found in Job 1:8. Today, we look at God's statement about His Son Jesus, as found in Matthew 3:17. When describing Jesus, God said: "This is my beloved Son, **IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED!**" Can God talk about you the same way? Can God say you His beloved son or daughter, in whom He is well pleased? Not just pleased, but **WELL** pleased? You may not be all the way there yet, but it's a goal, and I encourage you to set it for yourself today. How pleasing have you been to the Lord lately? 2 Corinthians 5:9 says that whether we're in Heaven with Jesus, or on earth apart from Him, we're to always strive to be **WELL-PLEASING** to Him. That's a goal. For you, for me, for any and every Christian.

Here's something else to remember about being "well-pleasing" to God. Hebrews 11:6 says without faith its **IMPOSSIBLE** to please God. It didn't say it would hard to please Him without faith, it said it would be **IMPOSSIBLE**. So, if I'm setting for myself the goal of being well-pleasing to God, I

must, at the same time, set for myself the goal of developing and perfecting my faith walk. To do that, I must learn to think like Christ, to have the “mind” of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). What is one the primary ways I develop the mind of Christ? By doing what Jesus did, which is to use His faith on behalf of the needs of others first. We must be like that, always putting others before us in faith, so that we can truly be pleasing to God, as Jesus was. How about you today? Can God truly say He is well-pleasing over you? Are you living and walking by faith, and using your faith not just for yourself, but for others first and foremost? Doing that will bring you favor in God’s eyes, and a sense of deep satisfaction down deep in your heart. It’s a great goal, so go for it and make it one of your standards of personal excellence that helps keep you on God’s straight and narrow pathway!

10/05/08

2 Kings 23:25 **BE LIKE KING JOSIAH!**

We’re talking about standards of excellence we set for ourselves in this life. We’ve looked at two so far, and today we’ll look at a third. From 2 Kings 22, we see King Josiah purging Israel from all filth of sin and idolatry. When finished with this national purge, the Bible makes this statement about him: **BEFORE HIM THERE WAS NO KING LIKE HIM, NOR WAS THERE ANY KING LIKE HIM AFTERWARDS EITHER.** God said that when it came to loving Him with all one’s heart and soul, nobody could compare with Josiah. This is a goal we can, and should, set for ourselves as well. I want God to say that before me nobody ever loved Him as intensely as I do, and nobody ever will either. Wow! Would you like God to talk about you that way? Oh Pastor Mike, that’s an impossible goal to set for oneself! Why? Just because it **SEEMS** out of reach? Listen, if Josiah could qualify for such a statement in the Old Testament, while not yet being born-again like Christians are today, how much more could we love God with that kind of fervor and intensity! It’s a goal. You may not be there yet, but set this as a goal, and let God help you work towards achieving it.

Remember these are goals to shoot for. You may not hit the mark, but at least you set them out there in front of you as goals you can work to attain for the glory of God. And if you fall, and violate one or more of your own standards of excellence, be like Micah 7:8, and declare to the enemy that even though you have fallen, you’re getting right back up, and the fight goes on! Glory to God! I myself have failed these standards many times, but I’m still going! I’m still in the hunt! I’m like the Energizer bunny, I just keep going and going and going! God knows our frame, and our struggles, but what He appreciates is the effort. He appreciates it when His children decide to raise the bar of excellence in their lives, for no other reason than to please and glorify God. That’s good! So it can be done my friend! You can be as impressive to God as King Josiah was way back then. Decide to turn to the Lord with all your heart and soul, and God will be talking about you the way He was about Josiah!

10/06/08

2 Kings 23:25 **YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE YOUNG TO BE YOUNG!**

In my life, as I’ve traveled all over the world in ministry, I’ve seen and met many people. Some are young, some are old. Some are in-between. But, I’ve noticed that many times, young people **ACT** old, and many times, old people **ACT** young. The age issue isn’t always about years, but sometimes, its more about attitude. And this is what I want to always guard and protect, a youthful attitude towards life and ministry. I want to be like Josiah, its one of my goals. He was young and radical for God. He wasn’t just committed to serving God, he was **EXTREME** in his service to God. When he found what the Word of God had to say about the condition of his country, he began a national purge that was as violent as it was extreme. I want that same kind of youthful exuberance! I don’t want to grow old before my time, and I don’t want the joy and energy of my youth to be lost. Its one of my goals, is it one of yours?

How do you see yourself? No matter how old you are in terms of age, how OLD are you, really? I know some people who are 75 years YOUNG, and some who are 30 years OLD. I myself, come November 22, 2006, will be 55 years old. Imagine! I can now qualify for senior discounts at Denny's! Wow! But honestly, I don't FEEL 55. I am active physically, and diligent spiritually. I'm not trying to be someone I'm not, but at the same time, I'm not preparing for my "retirement". With all my might, with God's help and grace, I plan on staying on the edge of life and ministry for another 30 years, at least. Should Jesus tarry, I'm planning on running a strong race for God, and I'm not going to let anyone (especially old thinkers) slow me down. I want to have the wisdom of someone in his fifty's, but enjoy an energy level of someone much younger. Why? For God. For the work of ministry. For the joy of serving Jesus while on earth. How about you? No matter how old you may be, you don't have to be OLD! Let God energize you by His Spirit, and pick up your weapons and charge the enemy! Give no tolerance to the devil, or to his evil works. Go out there and make a difference. Be a player, no longer a spectator!

10/07/08

Numbers 14:24

IS CALEB A MAN AFTER YOUR OWN HEART?

We've been talking about goals to set for ourselves which establish a high standard of excellence we hold ourselves to. We've looked at several verses, and several individuals in this study, and today, we'll look at another man whom I want to be like. He's Caleb, who, from an entire nation, was one of only two men over the age of twenty who were allowed to enter the Promised Land. Caleb, in our verse today, is described as man who follows God FULLY! He's a man described as having ANOTHER SPIRIT within him. In short, he's bold, daring, confrontational, extremely confident (in God), and fearsome on the battle field. Most of all, he's a man full of unwavering FAITH in God's promises. When everybody else (except Joshua) said they couldn't stand against the giants who were occupying their property, Caleb stood up and declared they could. God loves this kind of man, and I want Him to love me for the very same reasons. This is a goal of mine, and I encourage you to make it one for you as well.

You see friend, God isn't nearly as delicate as people make Him out to be. Jesus is not the weak, effeminate shepherd you see portrayed in religious paintings. Our God, and our Lord, are the two most powerful beings in existence, and their Holy Spirit, now living within believers, is the One who took God's word and created everything we now know of in this universe. So a man like Caleb doesn't scare God, or make Him nervous in anyway. To the contrary, He loves this kind of wild abandon for the things of God. Caleb wasn't the kind of guy who makes friends everywhere. He wasn't "polished" or "refined". He wasn't "intellectual" either. He was just a good old red-neck for God, who didn't mind getting in your face to tell you what he thought of you, especially if you're doubting God! That kind of man inspires me. Do you know what the word "Caleb" means? Some commentaries and translations will say it means "dog", but it goes deeper than that. Accurately, it means RAGING CANINE MADNESS! In other words, a rabid dog! So does that mean we go around purposely insulting people in the name of Jesus? Of course not. But when it comes to taking a stand for God, we become a man or woman possesses with a spirit that looks, acts and sounds like a rabid dog! Wild! Crazy for God! Not afraid to boldly declare allegiance to God and His word. This is my hero. I encourage you to make him one of yours too. I may not measure up all the time, but again, it's a goal! I'm on the journey, it's a standard I'm holding myself to. I hope you're doing the same!

10/08/09

Job 1:8

WHAT IS GOD SAYING ABOUT YOU?

Since October 1st, we've been looking personal standards of excellence we can set for ourselves as goals to shoot for. So far, we've looked at four of them, and all of those we've looked at deal with what God is saying about us. First, we looked at what God said about Job. God asked the devil to consider his servant Job, whom He described as a perfect man and upright man, one who feared God and hated evil. Next, we looked at what God said about Jesus. Concerning His Son, God said He was His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased. Third, we looked at King Josiah. He was described as a King whose zeal for God was without equal. No one like him before, no one like him after. Lastly, we looked at Caleb. God called him a man with another spirit about him, following Him completely and fully.

These are four individuals whom we can use to set standards of excellence in our own lives. I want God to talk about me the way He talked about Jesus His Son, as well as the way He talked about Caleb, Job and King Josiah. The statements made about those men are statements I want God making about me. How about you? No, we won't always hit the mark, but at least we've made these goals to strive for, and to measure success and progress by. I encourage you to dedicate yourself towards this objective, and to make it your priority to so live your life in such a way that God would say about you the things He's said about Jesus, or about Caleb, or about King Josiah, or about Job. Are you perfect and upright like none other on the earth? Fearing God and hating evil? Are you a son or daughter that's well-pleasing to God? Do you have "another spirit" about you, one who follows God fully? And, are you seeking the Lord so fervently, no one can compare to your zeal? Ask yourself these questions, and let the Holy Spirit work within you to see the goals and objectives accomplished for the glory of God. Amen!

10/09/08

John 14:30

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ABOUT YOURSELF?

Since October 1st, we've looked at personal standards of excellence which we can set for ourselves. So far, we've looked at goals that deal with what God is saying about us. Today, we will continue to look at standards of excellence we can set for ourselves, but now we'll concentrate not on what God is saying about us, but rather, what we're saying about ourselves. Today's verse shows us an example of this. When Jesus was hear on earth, He said His enemy had **NOTHING IN HIM**. Of course, the enemy He's referring to is the devil. That's a goal every believer should set in life. To come to the place where the enemy has no inroads into our lives whatsoever. That no matter what he tries against us, he's can't succeed because we've given him absolutely no place within us, spirit, soul or body. Jesus made that statement, and it's a statement we can, and should, make for ourselves too.

Set a goal for yourself. Give the devil **NO PLACE** in your life, period. Set a standard of excellence that holds you to accountability before God. Constantly monitor your life, and make sure you've given absolutely no place to the enemy in any way. Not with your words. Not with your thoughts. Not with your money. Not with your motives. Not with your flesh. Nothing! Give the devil no place in your family, your marriage or your ministry. Constantly stay on top of things, so to speak, and make sure you're defenses are completely shored up, and there are no holes in the wall where the devil might slip in to do you damage. If there are areas in your life that you know are not right, then address them immediately, and kick the devil out of your affairs. Don't continue to allow him a place of expression within you, in any way. Just like Achan's sin in the Old Testament (Joshua 7:20), we must not allow anything evil to have place in our lives. We must keep the enemy out. Make this a goal, and a standard of excellence you hold yourself to. Don't tolerate the devil having any kind of place in you or your life. Slam the door on him and his lies and tricks, and make sure that no matter what he tries in the future, you can say like Jesus did: **THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD COMES, BUT HAS NOTHING IN ME!**

10/10/08

John 4:34

FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED!

Yesterday we took a look at goals to establish which describe how we talk about ourselves. We've already looked at several (four of them) goals which talk about what God says about us, and now we're looking at the other side of this coin, personal standards of excellence which have to do with what we say about ourselves. Today, we look at our Lord's statement about finishing the work He was given to do. This must be a goal, an obsession really, that you establish within your own heart for the rest of your life. FINISH the work God has given you to do. Look at Philippians 1:6. You must be confident that what God started in you on the day you got saved, will be completed until the day of Christ Jesus.

So many believers fail to understand the idea of endurance concerning the race we're running for the Lord. As a result, they fall away, give up, quit, or "throw in the towel". They don't make it to the finish line. They're never able to say, like Paul, that they FINISHED their course (2 Timothy 4:7). How about you? Is this your intent? To finish the race, and complete the tasks that the Holy Spirit has given you to complete? Will you be able to stand before Jesus someday in Heaven, confident in the fact that you KNOW in your heart that you finished the ministry He gave you to accomplish. Confident in knowing that you left no part of your assignment undone as you stand before Him on judgment day. This is a goal, and a personal standard of excellence you MUST adopt for yourself. Never be content with any unfinished business for the Lord! Of course, the devil will always be at work to derail you, distract you, discourage you, defeat you, depress you, whatever. But so what! That's what he does, so don't be surprised with it. Rather, be determined to find out what God wants from you (and He DOES have an assignment for you), and then with all your heart, be determined to finish what He's told you to do. Don't be like so many, who have quit and fallen away. Be like Jesus, and like Paul, who finished their lives knowing their assignments had been completed.

10/11/08

Acts 20:24

FINISHING YOUR RACE WITH JOY!

Isn't it sad when you watch some athlete running in a race, and then for whatever reason, quits and never crosses the finish line? More than once I've witnessed that, and whenever I have, I've always felt so bad and disappointed inside, knowing this particular athlete must've put in hours and hours, and even years of their lives, in preparation for the race they never finished. How sad! And yet, spiritually speaking, we've got all kinds of Christians all over the place, who never finish what they start for the Lord. Why? Because, in the end, they weren't strong enough to make it to the finish line! That's the bottom line. They didn't do what they needed to do to get strong enough to ward off all the attacks of the enemy along the way. As a result, they eventually DECIDED to quit and give up.

Yesterday we talked about establishing the personal standard of never quitting, or giving up on the race we're running in the Name of Jesus. We referred to Paul's statement in 2 Timothy 4:7, where he told his disciples that he had fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith. That must be a goal you establish in your life too. FINISH your race, whatever race it is that God gives you to run, finish it! Don't look for excuses for failure, they're aren't any! God has equipped every believer with all they will ever need to win the races we run. So get out there and get back in the race! Or, stay in your lane and never consider quitting or giving up. Paul, in our verse today, talked about how he set the goal of finishing the race he was running through the power of joy. This must be your tactic as well. Let God's joy be the strength it was designed to be. Don't ever let the devil take the joy of your salvation away, because if he does, you will have lost your source of strength needed to finish running the race you run for God today. Stay joyful! Always! No matter what! Finish your race WITH JOY! Start out in joy for your salvation, and STAY THERE all the days of your life! It's a decision, not a feeling. Make that

decision today, and finish what you start for the Lord!

10/12/08

Philippians 1:6

WILL YOU MAKE IT TO THE FINISH LINE?

God is prepared to take you all the way to the finish line. When you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, you began running a race that will continue until the day you die, or Jesus returns in the rapture, whichever event precedes the other. And the race you run is not a sprint my friend, it's a marathon. Therefore, you must understand the importance of perseverance if you're to finish the race you began to run the day you got saved. This is why its so important to set goals like the ones we've been talking about since the first of the month. Yesterday we looked at establishing the goal of FINISHING the race, and today, I want to continue emphasizing this goal as one which every believer must establish in life. Paul told the Philippians that he was confident that the work God began in each of them would be completed, right up to the day their lives on earth came to an end. But in order for that to happen, God needs your cooperation! He gave each of us a free will, and therefore, as much as God might be prepared to take you all the way to the finish line, He's going to need a decision on your part to work with Him, and never let anything or anyone convince you to quit or fall away. He can't make that decision; only you can.

I heard a preacher once say that statistically, its been proven that if I ask you to make a list today, showing the top 10 ministries or ministers who bless, feed, encourage and help you the most, then hide that list for 10 years and forget about it, if you pull that list out in 2016 and look at it, you'll discover that on average, 7 out of the 10 you list today won't even be in existence 10 years from now! Think of that! 7 out of 10! Why? Because for whatever reasons, those 7 gave up and quit. Only 3 out of the 10, on average, will still be plugging along for the Lord 10 years from now. That includes churches, pastors, missionaries; everybody. How about you? Statistically, are you going to be one of the 3 who hang in there, or one of the 7 who quit and give up? Its up to you, not God. He can't, and won't, force you to stand your ground in life, no matter what comes your way. You must do that, and that's why you must establish this a goal you hold before you always. Along the way friend, as you run your race for God, there will be many opportunities to quit and throw in the towel, so to speak. But only you can throw the towel, not God, and not the devil your enemy. So, if you decide to press on, and let God do a work within you, there's nothing the enemy can do to affect you in a negative way. That's why when it comes to establishing personal standards of excellence, this one must be included. I am confident that God will complete His work in me. Do you have that kind of confidence? God will take you all the way home, so be confident in that truth, and never let the enemy tell you otherwise. Remember, Satan is a liar, so if he's telling you that God will never forgive you, or work with you again, just laugh in his face. God's got your back my friend, all the way to the finish line of your life!

10/13/08

Acts 24:16

HOW'S YOUR CONSCIENCE TODAY?

One more standard of excellence I've established in my life is found in today's verse. I encourage you to establish it in your life as well. When Paul was talking to his disciples, he told them that he had a conscience void of offense before God and men. What does that mean, and what would that mean for you and I today? For Paul, it was a statement of triumph in the face of everything Satan had tried against him. No matter what difficulties, trials, persecutions and hardships the enemy threw against Paul, he always obeyed God, and told people the truth, whether they liked it or not, or received it or not. And, for us today, we must be able to make the same kind of statement about having a "clear" conscience. Do you obey God and tell people the truth about salvation, even if all of hell stands against you? Even if people reject your attempts to witness to them, do you still maintain an obedient attitude towards God, and do or

say anything He asks of you? This is what Paul was talking about. Now like I've been saying, these are GOALS, so that doesn't mean we hit a home run everyday for God. Over the years, there have been many times when I've failed God, and disobeyed when it came time to share the gospel. But, with God's help, by establishing this as a goal to shoot for, I'm looking to improve my "batting average", so to speak, so that more and more, my conscience remains free and clear before God and men. Even if those I preach to reject the message, at least I know in my own heart I did what God asked me to do, and that's a peace which nothing else can produce!

Remember this my friend. You're not responsible for saving anybody. Jesus took care of that through His death and resurrection, more than 2,000 years ago. Our job is to proclaim that fact, and nothing else. Once we do our part, we leave the rest up to God, and its then between Him and those we've been witnessing to. So if they reject you, they're really rejecting Jesus, so don't let their reaction or response affect you one way or the other. Just tell them, and that's it. They may love you for sharing Jesus with them, but they may not. They may hate you for it, but that's something that just comes with the assignment. Its part of our job as Christians, to share the gospel and inform people of what awaits them if they get saved, and what's waiting for them if they don't. Getting back to Paul for a moment, if you read Acts, you'll see how challenging his life and ministry was. Everywhere he went, the devil stirred up the people against him; trying to discourage him, destroy him, kill him, arrest him, torture him, whatever. But no matter what he faced, he kept telling people about Jesus. So when he reached the end of his life, he could say what he said. His conscience was clear. He could stand before God with confidence, knowing he had done all he could to preach the gospel as commanded. I want to stand before God with that same inner peace and confidence. It's a goal of mine, a personal standard of excellence I've set for myself. I encourage you to set the same kind of goal in your life too. Tell people about Jesus, wherever and whenever you're told to. After that, the response is of no consequence. You've done your part, and that will give you the conscience void of offense before God, and men.

10/14/08

Genesis 4:9

YOU ARE YOUR BROTHER'S KEEPER!

Yesterday, we looked at one more personal standard of excellence, that of having a conscience void of offense before God and men. I want to take today's devotional, and amplify that standard to you a bit more. Back in Genesis, right at the beginning of man's tenure on earth, Cain asked God a question about Abel. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Of course, in the context of what Cain had just done to Abel, it was a question posed out of anger, bitterness and self-defense. But the question itself begs the question we each must answer today for ourselves. And the answer, when viewed in the light of the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18), must be YES! Yes, we are our brother's keeper! We are responsible for informing people of the reality of life as it is, not as they've been deceived to think it is by the devil. This will, in most cases, be a very UNPOPULAR task, but its one we have as Christians, so its one we dare not ignore. People need to know what the truth is, and you're God's messenger to tell them whenever He tells you to. Therein is the "clear conscience" Paul spoke about in Acts 24:16. The world is so full of deception, and so many people are totally deceived and blinded by the enemy. You and I are charged with the glorious task of going into all the world and telling them the truth. If they believe and receive Jesus, they are saved for all eternity. If not, their fate is of their own doing because they were told, and chose to reject the love of God and the free gift of salvation. Its not our job to save anyone, but it is our job to be our brother's keeper, and tell them the truth about life and death, heaven and hell, the eternal aspect of it all.

This is what you must remember about your life on earth. You ARE your brother's keeper. You ARE responsible for being a living witness for Jesus. You ARE responsible for telling people the truth

when told to do so. Our lives on earth are not all about us, getting more, acquiring more, spending more, being more comfortable. Rather, our lives are all about informing people about the consequences of the choices they're making in life. Accept Jesus, and salvation is the result. Reject Jesus, and damnation is the result. Now, I believe that for the most part, the people who read this devotional will be people who live in places where most of those around them have heard about Jesus and the basic message of Christianity. Yes, there are many around the world who have never heard about Jesus, and God will deal with them fairly and justly according to their conscience (see Romans 1 and 2). But for the rest of humanity, they've been informed about Jesus, but in so many cases, they've been fed half-truths covered over with lies and deception. Many people think Jesus was a good Man, but not the Son of God. He was a great philosopher, but not Savior of the human race. Or, they've been lied to by organized religion, and fed the lie that their good works will somehow earn them a place in heaven someday, if they work hard enough. There are millions of them out there like that, and we're to talk to them, one by one as God leads, and let them know that's not the way it is! Salvation is by faith and faith alone, our good works can't do a thing to earn a place in heaven. And, our works after salvation can only testify to the truth that salvation is by faith and faith alone, they can't keep us saved anymore than they could get us saved! We're saved by faith, and kept by faith. People need to know this, and that's how you become your brother's "keeper". Let them know the truth about the mercy of God. The forgiveness of God. The patience of God with all of us. The love of God. And, the severity of God, the judgment to come, and the eternal finality of it all. Give them a chance to hear the whole truth. Be your brother's keeper! That clears your conscience, and gives you the confidence to stand before God with your head up and your shoulder square!

10/15/08

John 6:20

DON'T BE AFRAID!

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water in the middle of the night, they were afraid. But what Jesus told them is the same thing He's telling us today. He said: "It is I, don't be afraid". Or, as the Amplified Bible says, I AM; STOP BEING FRIGHTENED! What a great statement, and what a great truth to remember, especially when you're tempted to fear. In those moments, stop and remind yourself that you are a child of God, and as such, you are the apple of His eye. And you're never alone; Jesus is with you always, even if you don't feel like he is. If Jesus is with you, and loves you with all His heart, what are you afraid of? That's what He was asking His disciples. Basically, he was saying to them: Relax! I'm here now. And we need to remember that too!

When life seems to surround you, and you're tempted to be afraid, remember that you're never alone, and that the God of the Universe lives within you. Therefore, there's nothing to fear, and nothing to get nervous over. Jesus is well able to take care of you, your situation and your circumstances. Just let Him! Don't be afraid anymore. Besides, the fear you're allowing in your heart can't change whatever it is you're afraid of, so stop worrying about it! Jesus said that our worries could not add one "cubit" to our stature, so why worry? (Matthew 6:27). Jesus is God, the second person of the Trinity. He's also our Big Brother, and the head of the Church on earth. Every knee bows at the Name of Jesus. Every tongue must confess that Jesus is the Lord (Philippians 2). When He comes on the scene, everybody else must step aside! And the good news is that when you're in trouble, He's right there with you to take care of you, just like He was there for the disciples in the middle of the lake that night. Relax. Jesus is right there with you! He'll never leave you, or forsake you!

10/16/08

Mark 4:19

ARE YOU CHOKING TO DEATH?

While teaching this famous parable to His disciples, Jesus made this statement. He told His listeners not to allow the world to choke the Word, and thereby, become unfruitful for God. He listed three things which would, if allowed to, choke the Word in our lives. First, the cares of this world. Second, the deceitfulness of riches. Third, the desire for other things. Where do you stand with those three statements today? Have worldly cares and concerns choked God's Word in your life? Are you deceived with the allure of riches and lots of money? Or, have you found yourself desiring "other things" that don't have anything to do with God?

If the Word is to have free course in your life, you must guard against these three areas of carnality. The cares of this world represent an inordinate affection for temporary things of this life. Its ok to have things, but not ok for things to have you! Deceitfulness of riches would pertain to the allure money has on many people, and how they end up worshipping money and all it can buy. Money is just a tool to use to finance the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20), nothing more. Then there are the "other things". Those are the "things" that personally appeal to you, which for whatever reason, have the potential power to draw you away from God. Never desire anything that has the power to draw you away from God! Don't allow these things to get a foothold in your life. Stay on guard against them, and never allow them a place in your mind or heart. If you do, you'll find the Word of God being choked, and you'll be unable to stay strong against the temptations all around us. Remember, we're in this world, but we're not of this world. Everything here is temporary, so don't place anything of this world up on a pedestal in your mind or heart. Jesus is all that matters!

10/17/08

Luke 12:21

ARE YOU RICH TOWARDS GOD?

When most people talk about being rich, or becoming rich, they're thinking purely in carnal, earthly terms. But in today's verse, we see Jesus exhorting us to become rich TOWARDS GOD. Not rich towards men, or rich towards this world, but rich towards God. How do we become rich towards God and not the world? By constantly reminding ourselves of WHY God promises to give us wealth (see Deuteronomy 8:18). Its to establish HIS COVENANT on the earth, not to personally fill our coffers with wealth and riches. There is a purpose for prosperity, and it has nothing to do our personal financial portfolio. Instead, it has everything to do with SAVING SOULS, and fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18). To be rich towards God is to be rich towards PEOPLE! Witnessing to them, encouraging them in the things of God, being there for them when they fall down or make mistakes, and in general, just being available to God to help Him help people whenever and wherever.

Being rich towards the world, and towards yourself is pure selfishness. Its all about YOU. What you have, what you can buy, what you can do for yourself, etc. Being rich towards God is all about others, serving God and partnering with Him to reach out and share Jesus with lost humanity. Being rich towards God is all about using your wealth and personal assets in the pursuit of helping others find Jesus, and stay close to Jesus. Being rich towards yourself is all about self. Now of course, one could expect unsaved people to have a lack of understanding in this respect, but unfortunately, many Christians have the same mindset. How to be sure? Just look at how Christians manage their money and their assets. In most cases, the vast majority of money available isn't used at all to further the kingdom of God. Instead, its used to buy more, have more and enjoy more of what this world has to offer. Nicer cars to drive. Newer clothes to wear. Bigger houses to live in. Longer vacations to take. Ad nauseum. Anything wrong with a nice car, or a nice home or nice suit of clothes to wear? Of course not, but PLEASE! Let's keep things in perspective ok? There is a world out there dying and going to hell, and what are we doing about it with our wealth and resources? Its takes money to fulfill the Great Commission, and that's why the prosperity message is absolutely 100% scriptural, in spite of some out there who mis-represent the

message with greed disguised as prosperity. So examine your heart today, and make sure your desire to become rich is rooted in the right set of motives. Its ok to seek riches, as long as you know for why you're seeking them.

10/18/08

Luke 16:11 TRUE RICHES VS DECEITFUL RICHES

In today's devotional, we look at what the Bible refers to as "true" riches. So, if Jesus talked about the "true" riches, that means there are "false" riches as well, because if there are the true riches out there, there must be a false imposter, simply because anything God created, ordained or sanctioned will be counterfeited by the devil in his attempt to confuse and deceive us. Here it is in a nutshell. If you read the Bible from front to back, you're going to discover one thing about God. His crowning creation is man, and He has gone to great lengths to redeem and save us from ourselves. Satan also knows this, and in reading scripture, you can clearly see his one aim is to hurt God by hurting God's prize possession and creation, human beings. So then, what are the "true" riches, as opposed to the "false" riches?

As far as God is concerned, true riches are people, human beings. We are, and forever will be, the object of God's love. And as diamonds, gold or oil might be to men in terms of what makes men "rich", human beings are what God considers to be the precious wealth that is worth more than what words could describe. You see, gold, precious stones and gems, oil, and whatever else is down here that men say is "priceless", really are just rocks and black fluid, as far as God is concerned. Human beings represent the true riches in the eyes of God, so you and I must learn to see people the way God sees them. That way, we zero in on what the subject of "riches" is all about. Deceitful riches (Mark 4:19) are those that lure our attention away from the fact that PEOPLE are the precious gems of the earth as far as God is concerned. Money, gold, possessions, power, all of that represents the deceitfulness of riches. Those things NEVER make people rich. They only serve as decoys of the enemy, if you fail to understand and see the bigger picture. True riches represent people, and the more people you help, disciple, minister to, lead to Jesus, whatever, the richer you become in God's eyes! So what do you want, to be rich in the eyes of the world, or in the eyes of God? Put all your focus on reaching people in the Name of Jesus, and you'll never have to worry about being deceived by the "riches" that this world has to offer you.

10/19/08

2 Corinthians 6:10 YOU CAN BE POOR AND RICH ALL AT ONCE

This verse reveals a truth about the subject of Biblical prosperity. It reveals that fact that a Christian can be both poor and rich all at the same time. Now, in the world, that's not really possible, if you accept the world's definition for what makes you rich. Riches to the worldly would be having lots of assets, lots of money, and lots of things. Being rich in the eyes of the world means you can pretty much buy what you want whenever you want it. That's not how God defines a rich man. God's view shows us that a rich man gets rich because he's busy about the business of helping people draw closer to Jesus. The more people he leads to Jesus, or helps disciple closer to Jesus, the richer he becomes. That's what this verse is talking about when it says we can be poor AND make many others rich simultaneously. Yes, its possible in God's world to have NOTHING, and yet at the same time, HAVE EVERYTHING!

You see, if all you're concerned about is using your wealth, resources or prosperity to win souls, or in some way further the kingdom of God, then you've got everything. You've got wealth, but at the same time, you've got the awareness of WHY you're being blessed with wealth. In that sense, you keep yourself POOR in terms of humility and perspective, while at the same time you make other RICH by finding eternal life and security in Jesus Christ. Hence, you're poor in one sense, making others rich by introducing them to the ONE who represents the sum total of all that the world thinks their money can

buy, but can't! This is what I want you to understand about prosperity. True Biblical prosperity is all about USING wealth to finance the spread of the gospel, period. It's not, and never has been, about people hoarding and loading up on more and more possessions and creature comforts. That's not prosperity. That is, in most cases, greed disguised as prosperity. Our job is not to "show off" our fancy cars, homes and clothing to those who don't have any of it, and call that the blessings of God! Our job is to thank God for the wealth He gives, and then take the time to seek His face to find out how He wants that wealth APPLIED towards the business of financing worldwide outreach. No, God isn't opposed to His children being abundantly blessed, but at the same time, He expects us to maintain some measure of perspective, and awareness of our responsibilities to the world around us. An attitude and lifestyle that fails to express this represents a person who has allowed his riches to become DECEITFUL riches, as described in Mark 4:19. Don't let that happen to you! Yes, stand in faith for prosperity, but maintain proper perspective and realize that as long as you maintain God's priority as your own, you can in fact be poor while being rich all at the same time.

10/20/08

1 Timothy 6:17

TRUST GOD, NOT THE WORLD

Paul exhorts Timothy to command those who are rich to remember the source of their security. It's not in the wealth they've been able to amass for themselves, but rather, in the fact that God richly gives all things for us to enjoy in life. The word "richly" simply means abundantly. The truth Timothy was told to remember is the same one we must remember in our lives now. No matter how much money you have, or how much wealth you accumulate, you're never ever secure! Of course the world will tell you that you are, but in reality, you're not. Our security rests with God and God alone. Financially, the world could go to hell in a hand basket at any time, and then where would all the rich people be? They'd be in the unemployment line, just like everybody else! We've even seen this happen several times in recent history just in the USA alone. We've had several major stock market crashes in the 20th century, and who's to say it won't happen again? And again! And again! No my friend, trusting in uncertain riches is a very foolish thing to do!

The only source of security you have is the Lord. And the good news is that He wants you to be blessed financially, and wants to do so RICHLY. Notice what Paul said to Timothy about God in our verse today. God WANTS to RICHLY give to us ALL things to enjoy. Not a few things, but everything, and in abundance! Wow! Praise God for that! Poverty is not a blessing from God, and it never has been. Poverty is part of the curse of sin which came down on the earth as a result of Adam's fall, and it will remain a curse for all mankind until Jesus comes to establish His 1,000 year reign. So don't apologize for desiring prosperity in your life, because God wants you to enjoy all things richly. However, don't make the mistake millions have made, and are making today. Don't assume for one moment your wealth in any way brings you security, in this life or the next. It doesn't. Like Paul said: riches in this world are UNCERTAIN. Proverbs says your wealth is like a bird with wings that can fly away at any time (Proverbs 23:5). You may have it today, but it may be gone tomorrow. So what's the message? Trust God! Never trust the world when it comes to money or financial gain. Only God can provide the security all these others offer you. Should you save for retirement? Sure. Should you budget your money, and act responsibly with your spending. Of course. Should you invest in the stock market and all of that? Nothing wrong with it if you want to. But in the end, never forget that God, and God alone, is the source of your financial security. The world changes all the time, but God and His Word never change!

10/21/08

1 Timothy 6:18

BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS

There is a purpose for prosperity, and it has nothing to do with you having more, and being more comfortable in life. God's purpose for prosperity deals with outreach, evangelism, and fulfilling the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-18). **PEOPLE IS THE PURPOSE FOR PROSPERITY.** Reaching people. Helping people. Leading people to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Discipling them into a closer walk with the Lord. All of that costs **MONEY**, and that's why prosperity is scriptural. For no other reason than that, God wants you to prosper abundantly. Why? Because His plan is to use us to partner with Him in world evangelism, and we can't help out if we're broke and unable to make ends meet. I can pray for people, and I should. That's "free" in this sense. And I can walk next door and witness to my neighbors about Jesus. That won't cost me much in the way of finances. But what about the world? Millions of people still haven't heard the saving message of the gospel, and that my friend is going to take billions of dollars to accomplish. There are churches to build or to enlarge. There is land to buy. There are crusades to conduct, seminars to hold, and conferences to host. There are ministries to feed poor people, clothe the naked, and help those who can't help themselves. All of this is ministry, and all of it costs money.

That's why God wants you to be rich, so you can **CHANNEL** your wealth towards financing the spread of the gospel. That's what Paul is telling Timothy in today's verse. Timothy is being told to inform his rich church members that they're not to trust in uncertain riches, but to **USE** those riches to become **RICH IN GOOD WORKS.** Good works cost money to carry out, right? Want to bless a missionary and help him or her build churches in some foreign country? You'll need money to give to do that. Want to help your church buy land to build a bigger building? You'll need money to give to do that. How about you today? Could you say before God and men with a clear conscience, that you're **RICH IN GOOD WORKS?** Are you abundantly involved in the work of spreading the gospel? Do you use the bulk of your resources to bless others in the Name of Jesus? If not, why not? Well Brother Mike, I can't because I've got so many bills to pay, and not much money is coming in. That's why you should be believing God for prosperity, so He can deliver you from that mess, and cause you to become financially independent of those circumstances. That way, whenever He wants you to give to help finance a good work of some kind, you're able to. That's prosperity! Being able to obey God whenever He tells you to give is true prosperity. So, be encouraged today and become someone in Christ who is rich in good works. Like Paul said: **WILLING TO GIVE, READY TO COMMUNICATE!** Amen!

10/22/08

Mark 4:19 **IS YOUR MONEY CHOKING YOU?**

In today's verse, Jesus mentions 3 things that can choke God's word and cause it to be unfruitful in your life. First, He talked about the **CARES OF THIS WORLD.** Second, He talked about the **DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES.** Third, He talked about the **LUSTS FOR OTHER THINGS.** Any or all of these can, and will, choke you and cause you to become of none effect for the kingdom of God. The cares of this world represent the worries people have about their financial future. Will I have enough for retirement? Will we have enough to educate our children through college? Do we have enough insurance in case something catastrophic happens to us or to our assets? Those are the **CARES** of this world. Next, the **DECEITFULNESS** of riches. This talks about people who think their money and their wealth protects them from disaster. Its deceitful because only God can provide financial security, never a bank, stock broker, mutual fund, land purchase, or anything else. Third, the disproportionate desire to want more of what the world offers you in terms of creature comforts. A bigger house. A newer car. A rack full of new clothes, etc. If you allow any of these three conditions to usurp authority in your life, you're going to see yourself being spiritually choked, and God will be unable to use you to finance the spread of the gospel.

Remember and never forget, it takes huge amounts of money to win souls worldwide. The Great Commission is the greatest financial undertaking ever attempted by man. The good news is that God is working with us (see Mark 16:20), so we don't have to be concerned about success or failure as long as we trust and rely upon God. However, God can't use you to finance anything for Him or His glory if you're pre-occupied with any of these three conditions as mentioned in today's verse. Are you consumed with worry about your financial future? Have you become deceived into thinking your savings or IRA's somehow provide you with financial security? And do you lust and crave after more and more "things" the world has to offer? Do a check-up from the neck-up! Examine yourself to see if you're truly in the faith on this, because so many Christians are completely useless to God financially because of exactly what Jesus mentions in this verse today. Make sure your eyes are on spiritual things, and make sure you always manage your money with the awareness that your assets are for the primary purpose of partnering with God to save souls, period. Anything else in terms of priority would be a mis-appropriation of funds as far as God is concerned!

10/23/08

1 Timothy 3:16 THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

When Paul wrote Timothy, he talked about something called the MYSTERY OF GODLINESS. Beginning with today's devotion, I want to help you understand what that mystery is, because it is the foundation for everything that has happened for us in Christ, and which will happen through us in the Name of Jesus. First of all, the word "mystery" comes from the Greek word MUSTERION, which means something that is hidden from all but a select few. Its like an organization like the Masons. That is an organization that won't reveal many of it's policies, procedures and activities UNTIL you join the Masons! In other words, they're a mystery to anyone who isn't a Mason. That's what this word here in today's verse-a-day means. The mystery is something that only the church is to understand and know about. The world will not be able to understand this, and neither will the devil. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, only the church is to know what this mystery is all about. So if you're a member of the body of Christ, the church, you should understand what this mystery is all about.

If you look carefully at the mystery of godliness, as described by Paul to Timothy, you'll see there are six parts to the mystery. First, God was manifested in the flesh. Second, God was justified in spirit. Third, God was seen by angels. Fourth, God was preached among the Gentiles. Fifth, God was believed on in the world. Sixth, God was received up in glory. Of those six parts to the mystery, the first three deal with what God did through Jesus as our sin substitute. Those first three parts to the mystery deal with Jesus as our Savior, doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Then, the second three deal with the church, the body of Christ. The last three parts of the mystery show us what the church is supposed to be doing as a result of what Jesus accomplished for all mankind through His death and resurrection. Beginning tomorrow, we'll look at each of these six elements to what God calls the mystery of godliness. Knowing what this mystery is all about will lay a solid foundation within you, a foundation that God can build upon in the years to come. Sadly, so many Christians (at least those I've encountered) know nothing of what this mystery is all about, and because of that, they really don't have full appreciation for not only what Jesus did for all of us, but what we're now responsible for as members of His body. How about you? Do you understand the mystery of godliness? Its time to find out!

10/24/08

1 Timothy 3:16 GOD WAS MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH

The mystery of godliness begins with this marvelous truth. God was manifested in the flesh to mankind. The word "manifested" means He was revealed. 1 John 1:1,2 show us that when Jesus came to

earth, it was God manifesting Himself to mankind, as promised way back in Genesis, moments after Adam committed his sin in the garden. You see, when today's verse tells us that God was manifested, we're talking about Jesus, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One in essence and completely in unity, so when it says that God was manifested, its referring to Jesus, the Son of God; our Lord, Redeemer, Savior, and soon-coming King. God actually took upon Himself the flesh "covering" we all have while living on earth in this life. Its called our body, or our flesh. Philippians 2:7,8 tell us that in Heaven, the second person of the Trinity emptied Himself of all privilege and power of Deity, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, came to be born of a woman here on earth as a man! Amazing! When you really think about it, its absolutely amazing what was done when the Holy Spirit took God's word and used it as the seed to produce Jesus, all man and all God at the same time. Its impossible to fully comprehend or understand how this could come to pass, but by faith we embrace it and rejoice for it!

Remember, this is a MYSTERY. The world cannot understand this, and the devil certainly didn't know what was happening that night in Bethlehem when the angels appeared and announced the virgin birth to the shepherds. This was God's plan of redemption that no one knew or understood until after the Lord had been risen from the dead and the Holy Spirit sent to indwell the hearts of men and teach them these things. The Incarnation is not something to be understood with the mind, but rather, to be understood and embraced in the spirit. This is what makes Christianity different from all other world religions. God came down and became one of us, with the exception of sin of course. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was tempted in ALL points like we are, yet without sin. Imagine that for a moment! When Jesus was here on earth, God was here on earth. Living with us, eating with us, sleeping with us, being with us in every way. And although the Lord's disciples were told who He was many times, they really didn't fully understand it until after the Holy Spirit had come to illuminate their hearts. This is the first of the six parts to the mystery of godliness, and the foundation that cannot be debated. We may disagree on many other points of theology or doctrine, but not here. There can be no room for debate in this area. If somebody refuses to accept the truth of the Incarnation, they deny the very essence and foundation of Christianity. This is our foundation, and we should be proud of it and preach it and proclaim it without apology to the world.

10/25/08

1 Timothy 3:16 GOD WAS JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT

The second part to the mystery of godliness is the fact that our Lord was JUSTIFIED in the spirit. This is something that divides many within the body of Christ, because many have a hard time understanding what the requirements were for redeeming us from our sins. The word "justified" means TO BE MADE RIGHT, or TO BE MADE RIGHTEOUS. It carries the same meaning as when we talk about how mankind was justified before God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus was justified! What does that mean? Well, to this preacher, the meaning is quite simple and easy to understand by the Holy Spirit. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, God the Father made Jesus His Son TO BE SIN FOR US, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Now, was Jesus made to be sin with His own sin? Of course not! Jesus was sinless in any and every way, and had to be in order to be the pure and spotless Lamb of God as our sin sacrifice. The sin He was made to be was OUR sins and OUR SIN NATURE. Yes my friend, this is what our Lord did for all us! He died in our place, as our sin substitute, and as a result, incurred the full wrath of God against the sins you and I and all men have committed from the beginning. That's why Jesus cried out on the cross: "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Why did God forsake Jesus? Because God can't commune with sin, and that's what He

made Jesus to be for us, sin! That's why He was JUSTIFIED, because He needed to be! It wasn't His sin that sent Him to the cross and hell for those 3 days and nights, it was our sin! This is what so many fail to grasp.

We're spirits with souls, living in bodies. The work of redemption on the cross, therefore, had to be 3-fold in nature, and it was! By the stripes of Jesus our bodies were healed (1 Peter 2:24). Then, Leviticus 17:11 tells us that our souls could only be cleansed by the shed blood of Jesus. Finally, when Jesus became sin for us, He was separated from God the very same way we were as sinners before finding our salvation in Christ. When God forsook Him, Jesus died spiritually, and was separated from God. And dying as such, He went to hell for those 3 horrible days and nights, paying the penalty for our sins under the wrath of a holy God. But, here's the good part friend, he didn't stay there in that condition. He was JUSTIFIED in the spirit. Now, most translations will capitalize the word "spirit", implying that it was the Holy Spirit that justified Jesus, and of course that's true. In the same way the Holy Spirit justified us when we received Jesus as Lord and Savior, so it was when God declared the penalty for our sins paid in full. The power of the Holy Spirit re-created the spirit of Jesus exactly the same way ours was re-created. That's why I believe this reference to "spirit" actually refers to WHAT was justified, not WHO did the justifying. This is why Jesus is forever referred to in the New Testament as the FIRST BORN from the dead. Colossians 3:15 calls Jesus the FIRSTBORN over all creation. Hebrews 1:6 says that God brought Jesus into the world, described as His FIRSTBORN. Because of the fact that Jesus died spiritually as our sin substitute, and was punished in hell for those 3 days and nights before the price for our redemption was paid, His spirit was born-again, justified, by the power of the Holy Spirit, exactly the same way you and I were re-created the moment we accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. So much more could be said about this marvelous and awesome truth, but suffice to say here that your Lord did it all for you! His work on the cross brought healing to your body, blood washing for your soul, and redemption for your spirit. Spirit, soul and body, it was a complete work! And it is the second part of the mystery of godliness!

10/26/08

1 Timothy 3:16 SEEN BY ANGELS!

We're looking at the six parts of what the Bible calls the MYSTERY OF GODLINESS. We've covered the first two parts, and today we look at the third. Remember, the first three parts to this mystery deal with things God did for us in Christ, which we basically had nothing to do with. These three things are things God did for us; things we couldn't do for ourselves. The third part of this mystery deals with our Lord's coronation in Heaven, after His resurrection and ascension back to where He was before, at God's right hand. Hebrews 1:4-8 gives us a glimpse of what our Lord's coronation was all about when He returned from earth, having accomplished our redemption for us. Repeatedly, this passage talks about Jesus being presented before the angels, even declaring that angels are once again to bow down and worship Him. This is what the third part of the mystery deals with, our Lord's glorification once again, being recognized by the Father, and worshipped by all the hosts of heaven.

This portion of the mystery speaks of what Jesus is doing now for us, at God's right hand. Remember, Jesus Christ is all God, and at the same time, all man. While on earth, He had voluntarily laid aside all His privileges and power as Deity, as the second Person of the Trinity, and emptied Himself to become a man like you and I. In that sense, He was made lower than angels for those 33 years He walked the earth as the last prophet of the Old Testament, fulfilling all the law and thus qualifying Himself to be the spotless Lamb of God to take away our sins on the cross. But when He ascended back up into Heaven, having been resurrected from the dead, and having paid the penalty for our sins with those three horrible days in hell, He was honored and crowned as God before all of Heaven, as God proclaimed and declared

that Jesus Christ was in fact God, and was forever to be honored as God, the way it had been before the Incarnation. This is where Jesus sits now, and this is Who He is, our Lord, our Savior, our soon-coming King, but more than that, our God! Hebrews 1:8,9 described how God honored Jesus, and declared Him to be God, with a kingdom that will never end! Oh Halleluiah! This is the culmination of God's plan of redemption. God, the second person of the Trinity, left Heaven to become man, and die in our place as our sin substitute. Having paid the price for our sins, He was born-again in the pits of hell itself, becoming the first born from the dead, was resurrected and then crowned the winner for all mankind in Heaven! How wonderful, and how magnificent is our God! This mystery, well fully understood in the heart of a man, will cause him to never stop thanking, loving, worshipping and serving God. Imagine what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit has done to secure our redemption from sin! In our next few verse-a-day devotions, we'll now look at the last three parts to this wonderful mystery, which deal with the church, the body of Christ, and what we're now responsible to do because of what God has already done.

10/27/08

1 Timothy 3:16 PREACHED AMONG THE GENTILES

The fourth part to the mystery of godliness is the fact that after Jesus ascended back to Heaven, His disciples began the work of spreading the gospel message worldwide; commonly called the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). At once this project began, the single biggest revelation to come along was the fact that redemption was not just for the Jews, but for all men everywhere, Jew and Gentile alike. This was news to the Jews, who had thought all along in the Old Testament that salvation could only come to the Jews, that if you wanted to be saved, you had to become Jewish. But when Peter was sent by the Holy Spirit to Cornelius' house (Acts 10), and those people were saved and simultaneously baptized in the Holy Spirit, everything suddenly changed! Just like that, the Jewish world was turned upside down, as God demonstrated the fact that in His mind, there was no difference between Jew and Gentile under the New Covenant. Jesus had paid the price for EVERYBODY'S sins, not just the sins of the Jews.

And this is the truth that propelled the saints all over the world, proclaiming Jesus to the Romans, and to all who were under Roman occupation. This was in fact, Paul's primary calling, not to preach to Jews, but to preach to Gentiles, informing them that salvation was as much for them as it was now for the Jews through Christ. This was such a shock to Jews like Paul, that God had to literally take Paul out into the desert for three years, and show Him by revelation from the scriptures that salvation for all, Jew and Gentile alike, had been prophesied from the beginning. But remember, the reason no one understood this was because it was a mystery, hidden in God and revealed only after the Holy Spirit came to enlighten and illuminate men's minds. Read 1 Corinthians 2:7,8 talks about the HIDDEN WISDOM and the HIDDEN MYSTERY. It was hidden to keep the devil in the dark about how the plan of salvation would be carried out. God had already told the devil He would send a redeemer, so Satan knew One was coming, but God kept the whole plan secret so the enemy would walk into the trap exactly as he did when he crucified Jesus. And after the Lord was resurrected, to the devil's further shock and dismay, the whole world finds out that the plan of redemption didn't just pertain to Jews, but to ALL men everywhere. That through simple faith in the work of Jesus on the cross, any man anywhere could now be saved, that the keeping of the Old Testament law was no longer a pre-requisite for being one of God's "chosen" people. That's good news for me, I'm not Jewish! How about you? Thank God Jesus died for Gentiles as well as for Jews. This is the fourth part of the mystery, salvation was purchased for ALL. Tomorrow we'll look at part five, showing us the result of this all-encompassing work of Jesus on the cross!

10/28/08

1 Timothy 3:16 BELIEVED ON IN THE WORLD

The fifth part to the mystery of godliness is the fact that once Jesus rose from the dead, the Great Commission was given to instruct the disciples on where to go and what to do in the Name of Jesus. The fourth part of this mystery is the preaching of the gospel among the Gentiles. This, the fifth part, deals with the result of that effort. That is, as Christians have endeavored to obey the Lord's directive, people from all over the world have heard the gospel, and having heard, believed unto eternal life. The gospel is a message that must be preached worldwide, and this is the assignment for you and me as believers in the army of the Lord. Its not enough for you to enjoy the fruits of your faith, you must go forth and tell others about Jesus, the same way someone came to you and told you about the truth. That is your responsibility, and it **MUST** be carried out! Time is short, and so many people still need to hear the message before Jesus returns.

The way this is worded will indicate to us the reader that as members of the body of Christ, we are **ONE** with Jesus Himself. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says that if we're joined to the Lord by way of the new birth, we're **ONE** spirit with Him. Not two spirits side by side, but **ONE SPIRIT**. We actually become one with Him, and that's why the Bible says that as believers go forth into all the world, its actually Jesus going forth into all the world because He and we are one spirit. So as Jesus is preached among the Gentiles, He is also believed upon in the world. And once that assignment has been accomplished, the end shall come (Matthew 24:14). This part of the mystery is happening worldwide right now, all around you. Are you a part of this great international effort? Or are you just sitting around listening to Christian CDs and reading your Bible! Friend, you're called to be a part of this. God doesn't want you sitting along the sidelines. He desires, and in fact commands, that you get in the game, so-to-speak. This is your destiny, and your assignment. All over the world, people are "believing on Jesus". Are you one of those telling the untold, and reaching the unreached?

10/29/08

1 Timothy 3:16 RECEIVED UP IN GLORY

The sixth and final part to the mystery of godliness is found in this statement. After Jesus has been preached among the Gentiles and believed on in the world, He's going to be **RECEIVED UP** in glory. So if Jesus has **ALREADY** ascended and gone back to heaven, as it clearly says in Acts 1:11, how can He be received up into glory again? By way of the Rapture of the church, that's how. Remember, we and He are one, He is the Head, and we are the body of Christ. When you speak in the Name of Jesus, its Jesus speaking through you. He is wherever you are because He is living in you, and you and He are one. So when the time comes for Jesus to receive His own, and He descends from heaven with a shout (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17), all of us who go up to meet Him in the air become the fulfillment of this, the sixth part of the mystery of godliness. All believers alive on earth will be caught up, or received up, to meet the Lord in the air, and this will be one more event which brings glory to God, and to His Son, Jesus. The Rapture is going to be one of the most glorious events to ever take place on earth, and its not too far off!

I know some Christians have a hard time believing in the Rapture of the church, but for me, as I study the scriptures, it makes perfect sense to me. This passage here is one of many I could turn to which, in my mind, supports the idea of Rapture for God's saints on earth. And, as you study the mystery of godliness, and examine all six parts to it, you can easily see how it perfectly fits with each of the other five parts. Remember, the first 3 parts to the mystery deal with what God did **FOR** us in Christ. We couldn't save ourselves, so Jesus came to do that for us. But the second three parts to the mystery deal with what the church is now commissioned to do **BECAUSE** of what Jesus did for us on the cross. We go forth into all the world, we preach the gospel to every creature (Jew and Gentile alike), and when the time is right, we're caught up and raptured off the earth to make way for the 7 year tribulation period, which is still to

come. I believe this passage in 1 Timothy 3:16 clearly reveals the order of events, beginning with the Incarnation, and culminating with the triumphant and glorious Rapture of the church. This is the mystery called the mystery of godliness, and every believer needs to understand it to fully understand who we are, what we're called to do, and what the result will be.

10/30/08

1 Timothy 3:16 * 10/30/2006 * **DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE MYSTERY?** As I said many days ago, when we began looking at today's verse, a "mystery" is something revealed only to a select few. The word mystery here comes from the Greek word MUSTERION, which means something that is known to only a few, not to all. Therefore, the mystery of godliness is something that God intends to reveal to His church, something which unbelievers will never understand. It's also something the devil didn't understand either, until it was too late for him! When you speak about these things, understand that most of the people you speak to won't understand what you're talking about. Even many Christians fail to fully understand all six points or parts to this mystery. Remember, in Biblical numerology, the number six is the number of unregenerate man. That's why there are six parts to this mystery, because it deals with redemption of mankind, God fulfilling His promise to send a Redeemer to save us from our sins.

And the mystery also serves to remind us all of one great truth. To every victory in every battle we fight spiritually, there is always the part we play, and the part God plays. In this particular dispensation, God NEVER moves apart from us, because that's the way He set this whole thing up in the beginning. He didn't have to do it that way, but He chose to because He wanted to have us working alongside, as co-workers with Him by the Spirit. In the beginning, God gave man DOMINION, that's why all through the Bible, you see that God waits for man to pray, or for man to believe, or for man to speak, before He gets involved. And thank God He does, because this is how it works. Concerning any and all things, events or situations on earth, when we need God's help and ability (which is all the time), remember that God will do what we can't do, **AS LONG AS WE FIRST DO WHAT WE CAN DO**. We do what we can do, and God will take it from there and do what we can't do. What can we do in the light of this great mystery? We can obey the Great Commission. We can make ourselves available. We can say, like Isaiah, "Here am I Lord, send me!" (Isaiah 6:8). When we do what we can do, God does what we can't do. He empowers us. He anoints us. He instructs us. He protects us. He provides for us. He guides us. He corrects us. He disciplines us. He causes us to triumph. In short, it's a Divinely ordained partnership. This mystery is all about man taking rightful dominion to the glory of God, and partnering with the Almighty to fulfill His plan and purpose for this earth, that it will be a place where righteousness dwells, where Jesus is Lord, and where the glory of God is constantly in manifestation. If you're saved, you're a part of this mystery. Understand it, and make yourself known! Get into the game, so-to-speak, and become as available to God as possible. Your time. Your money. Your intellect. Your education. Your resources and assets. God's needs you. You're important to Him, and to the world around you!

10/31/08

Romans 13:11 **DO YOU KNOW THE TIME?**

For the number of days, we've looked at 1 Timothy 3:16, which describes for us what God calls the **MYSTERY OF GODLINESS**. There are six parts to that mystery, and each day we looked at one of those parts until we had covered all six. The last of those six parts deals with the Rapture of the church, which is a glorious event soon to come. It's the catching away of all living saints, along with the bodily resurrection of the dead bodies of all saints who have gone before us and are now in heaven. It's talked about in many places, but primarily discussed in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4. The point then for today's verse is this: **DO YOU KNOW THE TIME?** Do you understand how close we are to

experiencing the Rapture? This was Paul's admonition to the Romans believers. He said they should be doing certain things because they were aware of the time, that now it was high time to awake out of sleep, put on their armor, and stay as alert and spiritually vigilant as ever. Are you aware of the time? Do you live your life in the light of the days in which we live? Are you spiritually vigilant, watching and eagerly waiting for the Lord's return at any moment?

According to 1 Corinthians 15:52, the Rapture will take place in a moment, in the "twinkling of an eye". In other words, its going to happen unannounced, and take place so quickly it will all be over in the time it takes to bat your eyes once! Imagine that! As I type this for you and think about that fact, it bring goose bumps to my arms! Blink your eyes once, and that's how long its going to take for Jesus to come, the trumpet to sound, the shout from heaven to take place, the dead in Christ to rise, and we who are alive and remain to be caught up into the air to meet Jesus. Again, blink your eyes once, and that's how long it will take for all this to happen. In other words, you won't have time to say "I'm sorry", or "Please forgive me", or anything else to get your heart right with God. **DO IT NOW!** Do those things now, and as often as you need to each day to stay ready to meet Jesus. And above all, stay vigilant and watchful, living a lifestyle that constantly reflects your awareness of the shortness of time that is left. Follow Paul's instructions in today's verse. **DO THIS**, cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light, walk "properly" as believers who **KNOW THE TIME!**