

February 1, 2015 [*This month marks 15 years of itinerant living-by-faith ministry]

Dear Friends & Family,

'CABOOSE'S!' DEBUT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE



[1/26] I returned home late last night from a 4-day trip through 7 states [DE, PA, NJ, NY, CT, MA, & NH] encompassing 1,025 miles of driving. The ministry event was a youth retreat in NH for a church in *Newburyport*, MA. Interestingly enough, Newburyport is where the 18th century English itinerant preacher *George Whitfield* is buried. He, along with Jonathan Edwards, was instrumental in the *Great Awakening Revival* in New England in that century. I relate to Whitfield for a number of reasons: he was an evangelist, itinerant, & given to the dramatic in his presentation of the gospel.

LOGISTICAL NIGHTMARE



Besides the **bitter cold** in New England, when I arrived on site [after having driven about **10 hours** altogether since the day before], I was immediately hit with what I consider logistically a nightmare: the meeting place was a nicely remodeled barn, but-the room where we met was *on the top floor*. And-with *no elevator!* [see pic above-that's the actual place we met] Translation: if you look at the attached picture of my rig & equipment-they all had to be carried upstairs-including the Time Machine! Guess who had the bottom of it with most of the weight? Yours truly. The 2 young men assisting me were rookie Time Machine haulers! Another logistical detriment was that all of the bathrooms were on the bottom floor. Plus, the living quarters where I stayed were over ½ mile from the chapel. This was not only an issue re: time & distance, but it snowed all day Saturday & the area was very hilly & my truck is 2-wheel drive. I seriously & fervently prayed more than once for the Lord to help my truck get up the steep hills late at night after chapel when everyone else was gone! **IT GETS WORSE**. My challenges were only just beginning though. When I was setting up my object lessons for the first night's meeting, I had this almost debilitating fear come over me. It was so strong that I had to text my wife, oldest son, & two close friends for back-up. All I wanted to do was go home. I felt an oppressive restraining presence on my mind & heart. I have known for years **New England is very dark spiritually**, compared to the rest of the country. I learned at the retreat that of the top 5 non-church-attending states, New England boasted 3 of them, in this order: **Vermont #1, New Hampshire #2, & Massachusetts #3**. I was also told that only **3%** attended church! To be honest, I'm not surprised. Why? There is a recurring

principle all throughout Scripture: when a person, group, or nation is unusually blessed by Divine visitation & favor, they are always held more accountable by God than those who didn't receive such unmerited revelation. This part of the country boasted so many divinity schools at one time, training young men for the ministry: *Harvard & Yale* to name two. Also, as mentioned above, two of the greatest moves of God in American history occurred in this general region-the 1st & 2nd Great Awakenings. When God moves on & out from a place due to men's rejection of Him & the gospel, great darkness always follows & fills the void-with 7 spirits more wicked than itself, so to speak. As is often the case, rampant secular God-rejecting intellectualism was a major part of New England's downfall. Thinking themselves to be wise, they became fools [Rom.1:22]. Given the content & nature of my preaching for decades, I couldn't believe I was having feelings arise within me due to my fear to tell this group of young people (70% of whom I was told were not saved!) that- God loved them & had a wonderful plan for their lives. I'm sick just typing it. No such preaching nor message exists in Scripture. Examine the words of our Lord & the Apostles later in Acts. Yes-the gospel is the most profound exposition of the love of God-He so loved! Yet-*perish* is also in Jn.3:16-it too is in the gospel message, as is *repentance* from dead works. *These two* must be proclaimed as well to present a faithful representation of the whole counsel of God. My plan was to give the Gospel elaborated-i.e., in great detail & in the context of the overall scheme of Scripture: Creation, The Fall [dramatized via the Time Machine], depravity, inability, God's free choice to save or not to save angels &/or men, Jew &/or Gentiles, Christology, imputation, regeneration, substitutionary atonement, propitiation, faith in Christ, & God's keeping power. I have preached these same messages for years to young & old. Yet-in this setting this weekend I felt this virtually paralyzing & debilitating fear set in. Many preachers have succumbed to this fear in our country.

THEY'LL NEVER HOLD THE TURN



There has been a church growth mentality in the U.S. for decades: soften & tone-down the message & make church as comfortable as possible for sinners. It works. It fills churches. Sadly, so many pastors have been unwittingly driven by pragmatism & deceived thereby. Because of increased *numbers* in their congregations due to such weak-content preaching, they're persuaded that this must be God's way to do things. It is NOT. Again-look at Jesus' & The Apostles' sermons in the gospels & Acts. They all contain both the kindness [which is for all intentional purposes all seeker-sensitive churches focus on] & the severity of God. Seeker oriented pastors fear if they preach God's severity, that sinners won't come. The Scriptures do not concur with this conclusion. If **God** is moving upon a person's heart, they will both love & respond to *the whole counsel* of God. God's true character & nature is revealed via His *whole* counsel, re: how He has revealed Himself in His Word. The mistake this movement makes is that they equate God's severity with weakness in God. It's His dark side, so let's not talk about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. ALL of God is adorable & worthy of worship. He has no dark side. He has no skeletons in His closet, nor chinks in His armor. Even His **fierce wrath** is adorable, as it proceeds from His holiness. The key to depth in God's people is to constantly present to them both sides of God. His forgiveness & love is only truly understood against the background of His holiness, justice, & much-deserved wrath by us sinners. Grace is not amazing until it is understood how very much it is undeserved. If you present this balanced teaching to people & they don't want it, let them go! Don't misunderstand me, Beloved-I've worked with children for going on **30 years**. I

understand the milk & meat principle of God's Word. However, when a man is dying of cancer, you don't give him spiritual *Kool-Aid & Gummy Bears*! You give them the cure. The people who *truly* want THE Cure will stay with you & *they* are the ones you want! Otherwise, those who remain, if they're truly saved at all, will be very soft, shallow, casual, & not God-fearing! Need I say that one doesn't truly know God unless he also fears Him? Look at those whom The Lord Most High considered friends when they got close to Him: *Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, & John* [to name a few]-they trembled, they became undone & as dead men when they encountered Him with Whom we have to do. Having this head-on collision with the spiritual dearth of New England, I pondered later that *the worst thing* ministers can do to rectify it is to soften the message! When eternal souls are at stake-it's madness! On the contrary, the only thing that will break it is *Christ*-centered preaching, using the **Law of God** to lead men to realize their desperate need for the grace of God provided in the gospel. God used the preaching of Edwards & Whitfield to marshal in His move of the Spirit in the 18th century & it is New England's only hope for today. How vastly different this is from so much of the American Evangelical culture today. I heard years ago & I believe it with all of my heart: ***that young people today want to hear the hardcore truth.*** And that's what I have done & will continue to do with them as long as the Lord continues to give me strength, grace, & open doors to do it. Here is my fear, Beloved, re: these poor souls who are only given God's soft side if you will--there is a very poignant scene to me in the 1959 epic *Ben Hur*. I doubt anyone else would consider this part of the movie significant. But to me-it is earth-shakingly insightful in its spiritual parallel. The Arabian sheikh who owns the four white stallions that will pull Ben Hur's chariot in the great race, has one of his *untrained* servants trying to groom these steeds for the great standoff in the arena against the villain of the movie-the *Roman* tribune Messala. As the novice chariot driver is coming down the back straightaway toward the sharp curve, Ben Hur says to *Balthazar*, another bystander watching the event, Watch-they'll never hold the turn. And, true to his prediction from years of experience racing chariots in the Circus Maximus in Rome-they didn't! Beloved? I believe with all of my heart this is exactly what is going to happen to these poor believers in so many of these churches when God's ordained hard times befall us as He winds up history in His overall scheme of things. They'll never hold 'the turn. But-despite how "heavy &

hard" these doctrines are, I have been preaching them in this manner to ALL ages for almost **30 years**-often in tears & brokenness, given their awe, weight, & majesty. So, I continued to pray through the oppression, not feeling it break until the next morning. Along with **The Gospel Elaborated** above, I preached re: **Adoration Versus Idolatry**, & closed the weekend with a detailed message re: **Judgment Day**. I preached in tears at times & in brokenness, as this is what these awesome doctrines do to me. They keep me close to Him. They cause me to want to serve Him each & every day. They stir me to want to share Jesus with others. So-I preached to this group what I so desperately need to hear myself. All I heard was positive feedback from the the leadership team & the kids throughout the weekend. They loved the content & manner in which God moved on me to preach. One of the leaders said, This is great-we never hear this stuff. It's **meat**. A number of teens came up to me sincerely thanking me for sharing what I did. One girl said she was recording the messages. Another team leader told me the youth who got the most out of my messages were the ones who were *unchurched!* As the weekend progressed, I noticed more & more the kids were engaged, attentive, & responsive, whereas on opening night I had to correct some in the back row [like I've done so many times in the past as a children's pastor!] in the middle of my preaching. But, on the last day, when I gave that detailed message on *Judgment Day* [see attached pic of "Roentgen's Lab 1895"-I do a Time Machine drama before this message, depicting the discoverer of X-rays] they were as quiet as church mice! **A 'SIGN' FROM GOD** En route to this retreat, I passed the town in N. Jersey where I was born-**Pequannock**. I'm sure most if not all of you have never heard of it! Many times while taking this particular route [**287 N.**] for ministry purposes, I've wanted to stop & take a picture of the town sign [see attached pic]. Well, I finally did on this trip. While doing so I noticed a small piece of fabric lying on the ground. When I picked it up I was surprisingly blessed & stunned (?) to see what was written on it in capital letters: **COME HOLY SPIRIT**. Wow. Of all places in this highly wind-blown stretch of road in the hills of N. Jersey this little banner could land-not only was it right at the spot where I stopped but by the sign I was born under! [Take that in context & with tongue in cheek!]. To make it even more of a God-incidence, the person who drew it-his name was **Michael!** Wow. I try not to be too flaky but I couldn't help but believe this was a small kindness from God to encourage me on this particular trip, which,

given the circumstances, was so very pertinent. As the Tribune Messala said to Judah Ben Hur before the great chariot race: It goes on, Judah...the race goes on.



"CABOOSE! ON THE LOOSE"

Ministry/events for FEBRUARY & those not listed in last months newsletter:

- Jan. 7: IC, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David: worship leader
- Jan. 11: IC, Wilmington, DE: Via Dolorosa Room Captains' mtg.
- Jan. 14: IC, Wilmington, DE: 7 Days Ablaze young adults' ministry focus night
- Jan. 15: Ogletown Baptist Church, Newark, DE: EMF pastors' mtg.
- Feb. 1: Abundant Life Church, Birdsboro, PA: Sun. a.m. Service: leading worship & preaching
- Feb. 3: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//pastors' mtg.
- Feb. 7, 8: Word of Life A/G Church, Annandale, VA: 2 Sun. a.m. services; p.m. service
- Feb. 13: Lima Christian School, Lima, NY: school chapel
- Feb. 14: Friends of the Cross Christian Church, Corning, NY: Camp Victory Winter: 2 services
- Feb. 15: Door To Hope Church, Hopewell, NY: Sun. a.m. Service; p.m. Service
- Feb. 22: Wilmington Community Evangelical Chinese Church, Hockessin, DE: Sun. a.m. Service

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*[Michael is an ordained *Elim Fellowship* "itinerant" home missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, *Immanuel Church*. *Caboose!* is also an affiliate ministry of the *Hopewell Network of Churches*. For 15 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary, retirement to speak of, etc.,-yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both visual aids & drama, to all age groups either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: *Elim Fellowship*, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485], denoting it for the home-mission work of Michael Robert Guertin. If your church would be interested in ministry at your church or helping to support our missions' work in the U.S. to both old & young please feel free to contact us. Thank you so very much.

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