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*However, if you know of someone you think it might feed & bless, feel free to pass it on! Thanks!

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*VISIT OUR CAMP WEBSITE! : www.hopewellsummercamps.com

June 1, 2008

"FROM SUNDAYS' 'SABBATICAL' TO 'SUMMER RADICAL'"

Dear Friends & Family,

(5/20) Not long ago, the realization came to me that I had a string of six Sundays in a row where I did not go out to preach. As far as I can recollect, in the 8+ years I have been serving in this itinerant ministry, I have not had that long a string of "Sundays off"—not even close! The way I am "wired", I soon began to ponder before the Lord if there was something "wrong". Even in such "respites", I try to keep doing what I always do: study, pray, do administrative & ministry "manual" (w/my hands, that is) work. Also, there are various venues in which I serve at my local church. Well, while lying in bed the other morning, I was scanning in my mind my summer schedule. It almost induced a "panic"; well, at the least, it caused me to feel very anxious beneath the number & weight of all of the responsibilities. I can honestly say, it projects to be the busiest summer not only of my ministry, but of my entire life! It seems even to surpass the summer of 2000(?) when I conducted ministry at seven different camp locations in a number of different states.

I now see this "Sundays' Sabbatical" as a gift from the Lord to have time to prepare for the days ahead, but also to take care of the home front. We just had a graduation party for our son Caleb at the house this past weekend with about 40 people here. There were all kinds of house projects & home improvements to do before the event. In addition, there were a number of improvements I wanted to make to my truck before the busy summer schedule. At the time of this writing, camp is about five weeks away, but there is so much "pre-site" work to do, re: administration. (5/26) I think I may have discovered another reason for this "ministry sabbatical"—Kim & I have both been sick for over a week with flu-like symptoms...in May! I fought deep discouragement & fear that it might be the same "bug" that hit me last February, which lasted about 3 & ½ weeks! May the Lord be merciful.

"A Fathers' Day Gift: Exposing a 'Father's Day' Myth"

The first Father's Day was celebrated in 1910, the idea initiated by a woman in Spokane, Washington, to honor her Civil War veteran widower father. In 1966 President Lyndon Johnson declared the 3rd Sunday in June "Fathers' Day", & it became law under President Richard Nixon in 1972. It has been celebrated in the U.S. every year, ever since (scienceinfo.com). There was another Father's (singular) Day that preceded the U.S. holiday by several thousand years, back into the deep recesses of eternity past. A major difference with this one compared to the U.S. holiday, is that instead of the Father *receiving* gifts from His loved ones, He was *giving* them! The longer I live, the more I see that *most* errors in The Church are *well-intended*. There are many trite, cute, easy-to-remember doctrinal sayings that float around God's people for decades. It isn't till one really examines what the Scriptures actually say, does one discover that these often-popular quips are not as biblical as they first appear. Often, they come from human sentiment, emotion, "God must be 'fair' (in the *human* concept of "fairness") to all", etc., & often with a sincere desire to honor God & bring others to Him. Of course, no matter how well-intended the motive, both God & the hearers of His Word will suffer detriment rather than benefit from these platitudes if they are not *biblical*.

MYTH: "If you were the only person who ever lived, God still would have sent His Son Jesus to die for you." I don't know how many times I have heard this cited in altar calls, nor how many times I myself have said it. Again, it "sounds" good! It "sounds" like it exalts the loving, Self-sacrificial nature of

God. It certainly raises the level of the sinner's self-esteem, as far as how he feels God views him, & yet, there is nothing in Holy Writ that supports this bold statement. Given Who He is, it is a given that God certainly planned out the salvation of His people ages before the actual event. It was not a "patch job", or, "fix it as you go", re: the fall of man & his dire need of rescue. There are so many Scriptures that speak of God's foreordaining, pre-determining, etc. the events surrounding the passion of His Son (Lk.22:22; Acts 2:23, 3:17,18, 4:28). **"THE FATHER AT WORK ON 'HIS DAY'"**

So very many Scriptures also speak of a "giving" (& hence, the resultant enabling & drawing of that people to His Son) of a people to the Son by the Father after the Former fulfilled the conditions required to purchase God's peoples' redemption (Jn.6:37-39, 44,65, 10:29, 17:2,6,9,24). Hence, this "giving" of a people to the Son by the Father necessarily involves the Father choosing them for His Son. The people of God in Sacred Scripture are never described as a "choosing" people, but clearly, repeatedly, & emphatically referred to as the "chosen" people. What may seem like a "splitting of hairs" theologically, is actually a gargantuan difference, as being chosen puts all of the initiative, mercy, & sovereignty upon God. The Bible even gives *the time* of Father's "gift-giving", His divine "gift registry", if you will: from all eternity (II Tim.1:9); before the foundation of the world (Eph.1:4): a precious insight into this verse is that the act of the Father choosing us in Christ is in the middle voice of the Greek verb tense, which indicates that the Subject did the action "for Himself"! Hence, the Bible translations that bring this out, duly honor God & further comfort His people: "He chose us in Him for Himself". The following verse, Eph. 1:5, cites that Father also "predestined us to be adopted as His sons to Himself (middle voice again!)". His peoples' names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world (Rev.13:8, 17:8); He prepared His Kingdom for these "human gifts" to Jesus before the foundation of the world (Mt.25:34). The Bible refers repeatedly to the *number* of people the Father has given to the Son: "a great multitude, which no one could count" (Rev.7:9); "My Servant will justify *the many*" (Isa.53:11).

Given the unfathomable physical sufferings at the hands of sinful men, coupled with the holy & just wrath of God being poured out on Him for the sins of His people, it is incredulous to think that our God would do this for "only one". He *could* do it for only one, but it was not in His eternal plan to bring the most glory to Himself through His Son, Christ Jesus the Lord. You can be sure the Father promised Jesus in eternity past that, "I will make Your reward worth Your sufferings, My Son". Hence, so it is→"As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it, & be satisfied" (Isa.53:11). You, dear saint, were a "gift of God" before the foundation of the world, to *The Gift of God*! Happy "Father's" Day! Sincerely & gratefully on behalf of

Kim, Caleb, & myself, *Michael*

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Name: _____ Address: _____ Email: _____

[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]

[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home-missionary, endorsed by his local church. He supports his family & his ministry by faith.]

Ministry events for JUNE & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

May 23: Concordville, PA: camp director's mtg.

June 1: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Pottstown, PA: Sunday a.m. family service

June 3: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: Camp board mtg.//pastors' mtg.//directors' mtg.

June 6: Concordville, PA: camp directors' mtg.

June 21-27: Hopewell Network Teen Camp, Honey Brook, PA: pastoral director

NEWS&NEEDS: healing for my back/leg; provision; campers, vision, grace for camp; job for Caleb; grace for transition re: Caleb "moving on", i.e., getting married in August.

RECENT READING:THE COURAGE TO BE PROTESTANT, by David Wells; THE WORK OF CHRIST by G. Berkouer; Ezra-Esther