

June 1, 2010 "'SEWER' OR LATER, IT HAD TO HAPPEN!"

Dear Friends & Family,

(4/20) At this writing, it is only mid-April, & May's newsletter has already been written & sent by this time, but I wanted to share an experience re: this past weekend re: ministry in the inner city of Reading, PA. Upon arriving downtown with my truck loaded to the hilt with my Time Machine, object lessons, & props, I saw a plumber outside the warehouse that this particular ministry operates out of. He was running one of those big electric snakes down into a sewer line to unclog it. I was standing by my truck across the street waiting for help to unload. All of the sudden, this same pipe that the plumber was trying to unclog shot up like a geyser several feet into the air! There was a pretty strong wind that morning & it was blowing toward me, & yes, it was sewage! My host was wiping himself from it. I'm in my 25th year of ministry & have never had this happen! Well, at least I wasn't flogged or stoned! J The ministry that occurred this past weekend deeply moved me. Here, in this old warehouse, was a most sordid collection of sinners apprehended by Jesus' precious grace, as His precious trophies. Young & old, multi-racial, from off the streets, some delivered from the ravages of drugs & alcohol, some who weren't stable mentally, but—they were there! They were there in the midst of God's people, His presence, & His Word. On Sunday morning, my host said I preached for at least an hour. This included a Time Machine drama & a very illustrated sermon. I preached my heart out. Here, before me, was assembled a group of people, from toddlers to senior citizens, with all kinds of problems, issues, & struggles, & Jesus kept them gripped by His presence & Spirit's enabling. They responded, humbly, hungrily, to His Word when my host closed the service at the end. I felt very spent, but so very blessed. I felt like, "Yes! This is where JESUS is! He's right here with these 'down & outers' of society! I want to be here with them. They're His people! He identifies with the least of them!" Beloved, there is nothing else I'd rather do. May it continue, "sewer showers" or not! J "TO THE LEAST OF THESE"

One of the most moving aspects of this particular weekend of ministry, as I mentioned above, was the people. One particular young man (about 25), "Eddy", was deformed from birth. He had had several operations on his eyes. This explains why he'd tilt his head to talk to you. He was very short. He walked with a limp. And yet, despite these maladies, he was full of energy, enthusiasm, & a zeal to serve me & the rest of the church family. After the ministry was all completed, & I was packing up, I mentioned to my host re: Eddy, "Isn't it just like Jesus to have someone like Eddy in His family?" to which my host replied, "If it were all (the weekend's ministry) just for Eddy, it would have been worth it." My thoughts go once more to the first chapter of I Corinthians, re: those whom God has chosen to be in Christ: "not many mighty, not many wise, not many noble...but the "base" things of this world. Eddy, whom the world would consider less than normal, Jesus considers precious. Such are the ways of our Good Shepherd.

"HEAR NOT SEE NOT"?

(4/30) After having preached 3X in about 20 hours last weekend in PA, which included over 300 miles of driving, I preached twice & did a Time Machine drama ("King Josiah") yesterday at a Christian school on the other side of town for their elementary age group's "Spiritual Emphasis

Week". As is usually the case, I had tables of object lessons. The principal of the school came up to me afterwards as I was packing up & said basically, "The day of 'auditory' learners is over". He said this due to the glut of fast-moving visual stimuli via TV, video games, & the internet for the past number of decades, that the young are daily inundated with. I admitted to him that I realize my object lessons/visual aids are "low-tech". He countered that the Lord anoints me to use them & that they were very effectual. I replied that when I'm feeling "shallow" re: the Lord's Word, all I have to do is see one of my object lessons, & immediately the Scripture text &/or principle it illustrates comes to mind & I'm "hit" in my spirit with its truth. As I've often said, these visual aids help me perhaps more than my audiences, though the latter often thank me for using them, as they admit they're visual learners too!

#### (5/25) "A GRACE CRUSADE: THE DELIGHT OF MY LIFE"

This past weekend, I preached in the Gettysburg, PA area at an Elim affiliated church. Of all of the many blessings & delights of ministry, one of the most rewarding of all, next to seeing young & old get saved from the wrath to come, is that of seeing saints "get it", re: the indispensable acts of God's sovereignty in not only providing but applying their salvation. I noticed an older woman sitting near the front just wiping the tears from her eyes more than once as I endeavored, like a lawyer in a courtroom, to convince these precious people of their utter helplessness & "unloveableness" before the Lord when He set His affection on them & "came after them" in His seeking & saving that which was lost. I had to stress again & again that He saw nothing in them that prompted Him to lavish His grace upon them. The decision to do so originated in Him. If not, then their salvation is not all of mercy & grace, but based upon something in them. I used my red lava lamp to illustrate "what they looked like inside" in their lost estate, inherited from Adam's sin. Paul said that in his flesh, that is, in his human nature in his unregenerate state, there didn't live one good thing (Rom.7:18). I stressed that they were dead in sin (Eph.2:1) when Christ came to them on the day they got saved. Dead men do nothing but lie there dead; else, they're not dead. Jesus came to their gurney in the morgue, lifted their head, & poured into them the vial of eternal life, as one of my dear brothers in the Lord put it to me years ago. In their lost estate, none of them did good, sought God, nor understood His heart & ways (Rom.3:10ff). Their wills were bound by sin (Rom.6:6) & Satan (Eph. 2:2; II Cor. 4:4; II Tim. 2:26). They did in their "supposed" freedom whatever they wanted to do. The problem was, with their "wanter"! A totally sinful nature only wants sinful things! Just think, Beloved—even as Christians, regenerated, w/the Holy Spirit inside of us, with all things having become new (II Cor.5:17), with a "new man" inside (Col.3:10), with new hearts (Ezek.36:26), with God now for us (Rom.8:32), our fleshly side still is opposed to everything that God's Spirit inside us is for (Gal.5:17). How much more before we were Christians! Before they were His they were unable to understand nor to receive the gospel when they heard it (I Cor.2:14). They were un-able to confess that Jesus is Lord—a prerequisite to being saved (Rom.10:9) apart from the Holy Spirit's enabling (I Cor.12:3), Whom by nature they couldn't receive (Jn.14:17). By nature, they did not, & could not submit to the Law of God, & were unable to please God (Rom.8:7,8). Hence, they were helpless to do anything (Rom.5:6) until the Holy Spirit regenerated them, as He willed (Jn.3:8). Hence, because of their dire sinful condition & resultant helplessness, I told them Jn. 3:16 means absolutely nothing to us w/o Jn. 6:44 & 65,

i.e., that no one has the ability (or desire!) to come to Jesus unless the Father enables & draws them to Him. I illustrated this to them via a brief but poignant role-play, I had the pastor come up & repre-sent God the Father, his son-in-law play Jesus, & his daughter play The Bride Of Christ “to be” (i.e., in her pre-Christian, fallen state). The Father & Son were on one side up front, with the Bride 2B on the other side up front, with her back turned away from them & her arms folded in disgust, symbolizing her hostile nature before regeneration. Upon quoting Jn. 3:16, I had the Father send the Son across the room to her w/His arms stretched out, calling her to come to Him. Come, she would not, & could not, given that the only nature she had inside was one that was against God. Then, the Father came across the room w/a giant magnet, & began “aiming” it at the Bride. She had a “change of heart”, turned around, & embraced the Son! I then told the audience that’s exactly what happened to them on the day they “received” Christ!

#### “I DID WANT TO SEE A GROWN MAN CRY”

After the message, a grown man with children came up & asked to speak with me. He shared that he had asked Jesus into his heart at age five. He said he was a preacher’s kid. He then shared how for many years after that he tried & failed to please God, with constant failure & fear of God removing His favor & love from him, & basically letting him go. He wept tenderly as he had come to realize that God loved him even when he sinned & failed. I told him basically that he “read my mail”. I feel he was even farther along than me re: assurance of God’s never-ending love. Once again I was reminded of a scene from the 2003 movie “Luther”, that I have come to love & so very much relate with. Luther, fearing for his own soul, was being sent by his spiritual father to teach theology in Wittenburg. Luther, dumbfounded by this, asked how he could possibly do so? His mentor replied, “We always preach best what we need to learn the most”. That is perhaps the best description of the ministry that I do. So many others, including my wife, “have God’s love down” so much better than me. But I will tell you this—not “having it down” presses me daily to “have it down”. I preach to others my own discoveries re: His great grace, that are more precious to me than my life. I cling to these truths like a dying man to a cure for cancer. And, by His grace, I shall continue to cling to them & preach them as long as He enables me. Why? So that Jesus’ Person, work, & fame will be exalted & treasured more by His people. There is so much to treasure, & so little time in our short life spans to do so.

#### “A ‘PIZZA’ DE’ ACTION”?

While at this ministry event, I stopped at a small pizzeria to get some dinner the night before. I had eaten here a couple of times in the past. I ordered a cheese steak. I rarely eat them, even though we live in the Philadelphia metropolitan area! It turned out to be the best I had ever eaten. While sitting there I chatted with the woman who took my order, asking her about a very peculiar looking poster on the wall. It was an enlarged photograph of a proud looking man, dressed in a tuxedo, with a blue sky & white clouds behind him. The peculiar, well, to be honest, very eerie component of this photograph, was that a woman’s arm in the form of a cloud, extending from the clouds, was upon this man’s chest. Her arm was made up of clouds, except for her hand, which was “human” in appearance. I noticed her fingernails—French tips,

which I particularly like, not because “Guertin” is French, but because from time to time for special events Kim has had hers done that way. While I ate, I stared at this photograph, trying to interpret its message. I asked the woman employee if this was the owner of the establishment. She said it was, & that he had died about 1 & 1/2 years prior. Upon learning so, that eerie feeling increased & a sick feeling entered my heart. I feared for the man, if this was his concept of Heaven. The smugness on his facial expression belied: “self-made”, “successful”, “made it to the top here on earth”—presuming to have the same in Heaven”.

That sick feeling worsened when I thought of the horror that if this truly was an accurate interpretation of this man’s beliefs, the horrific nightmare he was now facing, which is oh, so very contrary to his “afterlife-expectancy!” Further adding to my dismay was how much this looked like an “American” version of radical Islam’s fantasies re: the afterlife for suicide bombers, i.e., 72 virgins waiting for them in the afterlife upon doing so. Oh God, the gospel is such a “life & death” matter. May He help us not to be ashamed of it. May He increase our boldness, stemming from being constrained by the love of Christ—starting with me. Kim & I sincerely thank you for reading this, for your prayers to the Father for us, & for your help & support.