

March 1, 2010

Dear Friends & Family,

“HOW DO YOU LIKE D’EM (BIG) APPLES?” or... “ZEALOUS FOR THE ‘JEALOUS’ ONE”

(1/20) This past weekend, I did a whirlwind tour of ministry in the New York City area. In the space of 22 hours, I setup & tore down, packed & loaded, & preached three times. This event also included 300+ miles of driving as well. The first service entailed a multi-youth group setting, inter-racial, with one group coming from The Bronx. Having grown up & lived in the suburbs most of my life, in the natural, I knew I was out of my element, despite having done inner-city ministry several times before. I encouraged myself in the Lord beforehand that the gospel was cross-cultural, that these were people, no matter what race or culture & environment they came from, & hence, they all were in need of the gospel! How quickly any apprehension I had dissipated, as I watched the Lord move upon these young as they heard His Word, & were touched by His Spirit. As they came to the front at the end to be prayed for, I’d just hold them (guys only!) &/or put my hand on their hearts while I entreated the Lord for them. I spoke mostly from II Cor. 11, where the apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians that he had godly jealousy over them. He felt this emotion of the Lord so strongly, as Paul was the one who led them to Jesus. In doing so, he conveyed to them that he did so in order to present them (upon their glorification) to Christ as a chaste, pure virgin-“fiancee” to their Husband-to-be. But, he was deeply jealous & troubled as this part of that great body of people that make us Jesus’ fiancee’ on earth was committing spiritual adultery with their minds & affections. Paul feared that they’d be led into this error by Satan in the same manner that he deceived Eve. I elaborated how Satan deceived Eve & the tactics & strategy he used, & how he uses the exact same schemes today with the young. I repeatedly emphasized that Satan cannot snatch God’s people from His nor Jesus’ hands (Jn.10:27-29). Because the evil one realizes this, instead, he goes after God’s peoples’ affections, which, when you get them from someone, you get at least half the man! When elaborating re: God’s jealousy, I told the teens this was one of the most glorious & adorable attributes God has, as it is proportionate to & rooted in His love for His people. His jealousy is our security! Oprah Winfrey walked away from the God of her childhood, when she heard a preacher speak of God’s jealousy. Why? She made the common mistake of likening it to human jealousy, which almost always is riddled with pride, selfishness, possessiveness, & evil intent. Had she pursued to understand the nature of God’s holy jealousy, rooted in His affections for His people, she would have had a very different outcome! I told the youth that if someone came to my door & told me, “Hey, Michael! Your next-door neighbor’s wife is flirting with the guy down the street!”, I wouldn’t care that much. Sure, I’d be bummed for the man & angry & disappointed with the wife, but not to any considerable extent. But, if that same person came to my door & said, “Hey, Michael! Your wife KIM is flirting with the guy down the street!”, then, we’d have an issue! Why? Of all of the possible choices I may have had for a wife, KIM is the one I chose. She is the one I vowed before the Lord & many witnesses that I would love, cherish, provide for, protect, & be faithful to until death parted us. In the light of that, I expect reciprocated love & devotion to me. I didn’t commit myself to Kim so that she could give her eyes & heart-affections to another man! This is exactly what Paul was feeling

toward the Corinthian Christians, as he feared that their minds & hearts were being led astray from simple & pure devotion to their Husband-to-be, The Lord Jesus. God's Spirit then came upon a number of the youth, who came forward for prayer. Like all of us, I'm sure, they are daily enticed & lured by so many different attractions offered by the devil through our eyes & ears. There were a number of pastors in the room, who asked for my contact information. If it is God's will, I shall return. If not, I'm still very grateful for this night of encounter with these precious young, with our Jealous God (Ex.34:14).

**"DON'T TAMPER W/THE REACTOR!"**

There are few things in life I love more than when, while I'm studying God's Word, something jumps out at me, & "cuts me" from it. The Word of God is not likened as sharper than any two-edged sword for nothing! In preparation for a youth retreat I'm doing this weekend, I was once again in II Chr.34 re: the life of King Josiah. While searching the temple, which had been forsaken & abandoned & left in ruin by prior kings of Judah, presumably for several decades, The Book of the Law was "accidentally" found. When Shaphan the scribe read the words of the Book to the king, the latter was "cut to the heart", & tore his robes in fear, conviction, & trepidation. God highly esteems such people (Isa.66:2). For doing so, the pro-phetess Huldah, whom he would consult afterwards, said he would be spared from the doom to come. If one reads the curses of the Law, re: resulting from disobeying it in Deut. 28, one staggers at God's holi-ness! Josiah sure did! In the light of this, I'm absolutely dumbfounded when I see liberals of the past & present, tone-down the Word of God, attack it, demean it, "edit" it, mock those who believe its literal "plain-sense", intellectualize it away, & neglect its full counsel in order to fill their churches, with more people who are just as shallow & liberal as them! It truly is like tampering with a nuclear reactor! When one gets an overdose of radioactivity, whether working in an X-Ray lab or nuclear power plant, one does not notice the damage immediately. In fact, it can take several years for the abuse &/or neglect of radiation to manifest its deadly & cancerous consequences. It's as if one is committing a slow-death spiritual suicide! This causes me to fear & marvel! Because our God does not speedily execute judgment, the sons of men do not fear (Ecc.8:11). The Word of God is like honey, sweet to the taste of the soul. It is an anchor, holding us within the veil in the most tempestuous spiritual storms of warfare. It calms the mind reeling from devastating attacks & seemingly insurmountable suffering. Yet, like King Jehoiakim, there are many who "cut it up in pieces & throw them into the fire" in their hearts & minds (Jer.36:23-25). I preached this past Sunday that when the gospel leaves a church, so does God! He identifies Himself, & manifests His live-giving presence in a given place with a "collection of words", called "the gospel". When the gospel is neglected, diminished, edited, watered-down, God moves on! He cannot identify nor confirm any other message! May He help us to revere & protect the radioactive nuclear reactor of His Word!

**"VIA DOLOROSA '7' ON OUR DOORSTEP!"**

\*In just a few weeks, our church begins the massive effort of setting up & performing our annual event, "Via Dolorosa" (Thurs.-Sat., April 1-3). We "morph" the church building into a replica of 1st century Jerusalem. It a huge amount of work, but a labor of love. If you would so

bless & grace us with your presence, we would be honored. The Via crew's deepest desire is that the visitors see The Scriptures come alive, & the gospel dramatically & clearly presented. If our God graces us again to do so in this our 7th year, we would be sincerely humbled. May it be so. Sincerely,  
"Pontius Pilate". J

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\*[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship "itinerant" home missionary. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since Feb. of 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, ministering "on the road" full-time, preaching God's Word & systematic theology, using both visual aids & drama, to all age groups either separately or combined, as the Lord opens doors. If you feel the Lord leading you to help support this ministry, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thank you!]