

*[recent sermons can be heard via our new website &/or iTunes]

*"To avoid criticism, don't say anything, don't do anything, don't be anything." [A church marquis I saw last weekend in my travels ;0]

March 1, 2012

UNREQUITED LOVE

Dear Friends & Family,

(1/30) I arrived home yesterday afternoon from preaching at a church in PA. While there, I heard some of the most beautiful sounds in the world. It was the sound of God's people erupting in joy & praise while either getting it for the first time, or being reminded again of the freeness, sovereignty, & amazement of God's grace provided, & in this particular case, applied. Most gospel-preaching churches hear the former on a regular basis, re: how & what God provided for their salvation, but rare is the church that preaches how He applied it. After preaching re: Creation, **The Fall**, Original Sin, The Law's inexorable & exacting demands & punishments, God's freeness to save or not to save, His decision to bypass saving **Lucifer & his fallen angels**, His being under no obligation to include us Gentiles in His plan of salvation, the placing of His Son under the Law, & in our sinful stead, its curse, **the Cross**, where Jesus, with His peoples' sins imputed to Him, bore God's **wrath** Who sent Jesus to satisfy His justice & appease His Own wrath, & the resultant righteousness of God imputed to believers, I then had "**God the Father, Jesus, & The Bride of Christ-To-Be** come up to the front. I had the Father place His hands on the shoulders of His Son, & then quoted John 3:16. The Father then sent the Son across the front of the church to the other side where Christ's Bride-To-Be, a.k.a. The Church [not yet redeemed & in her fallen state] stood with her back to Him with her arms folded in obstinate rebellion & disgust. I had earlier elaborated re: The Fall, how we, by nature, were hostile to God & hated everything about Him. Jesus came over to her, with His arms held out, calling her to come to Him. No response. I then told the audience that John 3:16 means nothing & accomplishes nothing without John 6:44 & 6:65. No one comes to Me, unless the Father draws him [the same Greek word used for pulling a sword out of a sheath (Mt.26:51) & for dragging Paul before the Jewish authorities (Acts 16:22)]. I then had the Father come over to Christ's Bride-To-Be with a very large magnet & start pointing & shaking it at her, whereupon, she turns around & embraces her newfound Husband. I told the church that is what actually happened on the day they got saved. If Father didn't enable, they would have never come, neither wanting to nor being able to do so. Freedom & joy erupted.

GUERTY'S GURNEY

While walking down the long hallway of this former school turned into a church, I happened to notice a "body" in one of the classrooms. It somewhat startled me at first as I spent the night before alone in the church, having arrived Saturday evening to setup. It turns out it was a "cadaver". It also turns out that there were three cadavers in this room! I thought it somewhat strange for a church. I'm sure many of you who know

me well are thinking: “YOU think that’s strange?” The king of unusual object lessons & visual aids? [& to be honest, I have had a mannequin in a coffin sermon illustration in my possession for over 20 years!] I found out later that one of the church’s leader’s wives is an EMT who conducts training classes in the church building. To restate the doctrine of “inability” above, which I had already illustrated with [the Father, Son, & Bride-To-Be](#) skit, I decided on a whim to do another illustration that I have only rarely spoken of but which is very powerful & which I learned years ago from a dear brother, friend, & mentor, a.k.a., George Bowen. [Despite the fact that I had more than enough object lessons for the day, how many times through the 12 years of itinerant ministry have I seen a gurney in a church with a cadaver on it?! I knew I’d regret it if I didn’t use it. After all, I already had on the stage my “[vial of eternal life](#)” visual aid!] After conducting the previous skit with the three actors, I said, “To put it another way...”. This was my EMT’S cue to bring the gurney with the cadaver lying on it covered with a sheet up to the front of the church.

NO VIAL AFFECTION

I held a clear glass cruet/vial in my hand with [green](#)-colored “potion” in it. I called it “The Vial of Eternal Life”. I held it right next to the dead body on the gurney [in a morgue, let’s make believe], which is a perfect depiction of what we were before we were regenerated. [The Scriptures](#) declare repeatedly that we were dead in trespasses & sins. I then talked to the cadaver saying, Hey, if you want to live forever, all you have to do is reach over & take the vial of eternal life [a.k.a., the gospel], drink it, & you will!” My EMT friend then proceeded to lift the cadaver’s hand to take the vial. I abruptly told her, “No. That’s not biblical”. If the cadaver can reach out & take the vial, the cadaver is not dead! I again related “the invitation” to the cadaver. My friend did it again! I told her the same thing. I then had a brother dressed up as “[Jesus](#)” come over with the vial in His hand, lift the head of the “spiritually dead person” & pour the vial’s contents into it’s mouth. And this, Beloved, is exactly what happened on the day you got saved! [Father](#) had to first touch [your heart](#), make it new, remove its hostile nature to Him & all things divine [if you want proof of that, just go to Galatians 5:17 & see the fruits of the flesh, a.k.a., fallen human nature. Paul says it is violently in opposition to the fruits of the Spirit. If this is so after we become Christians, what is the nature of the case before we are Christians?!] & enable you to believe & receive the gospel. Ephesians 2:5 is emphatic—even when we were dead in trespasses & sins, [God] made us alive in Christ.

Hence, when we see people convincingly respond to the preaching of the gospel message, we know that there is much more going on with them at the moment in the unseen world via the Father’s immediate presence & work, than they realize! It was declaring & emphasizing these amazing truths of God’s enabling grace that moved this church to erupt with shouts, smiles, & the raising of hands, & they were not an overtly charismatic or Pentecostal church! Understanding grace causes freedom & joy to erupt, Beloved! There are few things more satisfying to me as a preacher of the gospel than to see God’s people “get it” re: it is because of Him [God the Father] that you are in Christ

Jesus (I Cor.1:30).

“HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS GETTING!”

While relating the aforementioned two skits & illustrations, I cited John 13:15, where Jesus said, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” I then cited Eph. 1:4 where Paul by the [Holy Spirit](#) declares to the Ephesian Christians: “God chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world”. The people were getting more & more “freed” as I related how this very precious verse, which became life to me in the darkest period

of my life, where I had some suicidal thoughts that “scared me”, also became my “battleaxe” in spiritual warfare! On “those” days, you know, those very dark days in your Christian life, when, “while you’re asking God to forgive you of a sin you’re doing it again” days—when, if you’re not telling yourself you’re not going to make it, & that God has had enough of you & is going to let you go, **the devil** surely is? This precious verse in

Ephesians, & many more like it, remind you, & the devil, that when God decided to choose you in Christ before the foundation of the world, He, in His omniscience & foreknowledge of all events, both actual & possible, was already well-aware & fully cognizant of this very dark day you would have [&, let’s be honest—many more like it!], & O, glorious truth—He still chose to choose you! Now that blessed, soul-warming, heart-comforting, worship-evoking truth is one of the most powerful weapons a Christian has against the many & sordid attacks of the evil one, & not to mention, their own conscience, which can both terrify & terrorize us as well! While in this “dark hour of the soul years ago”, God’s Spirit led me to immerse myself in Eph. 1:3-8, again & again. I had never done an in-depth study in that portion of the Word before. I began to see that this whole salvation that we are about is so much bigger than me. I was in the **heart**, mind, & plan of God **millennia before** I was born. He merely brought it about on March 31, 1974, around 12 noon in an [Ursuline Academy](#) in a tiny town in Missouri.

"Caboose!-->in a Sentence"

After ministering at a prayer breakfast recently, a wom-an came up to me, & in tears, told me of her journey, from growing up Baptist, to becoming a Mormon, to “coming back to Jesus”. It was a very tender moment, as I let her weep like **a little girl**, & just held her hands. She said something to me that I have never heard in 26 years of ministry, & that I shall never forget: “**You teach college-level...with toys**”. Kim & I are grateful to those of you who feel to help us to continue to do so.

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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 14 years he served on various local church staffs full-time. Since 2000, he & Kim have lived by faith, having no salary, retire-ment, or health insurance-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. If you feel to have Michael come to your church, or to help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: [Elim Fellowship](#), 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485].

Ministry/events for [MARCH](#) & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Feb. 18: IC, Wilmington, DE: Via Dolorosa Leaders' mtg.//Warehouse youth group worship leader

Feb. 26: Living Stones Fellowship, Peach Bottom, PA: potential summer camp campers' parent mtg.

March 4: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Warehouse youth group: worship leader

March 6: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hnc board mtg.//pastors' mtg.

March 18: IC, Wilmington, DE: "Via Dolorosa" 2-week+ setup begins!

March 22: EMF pastors' mtg. a.m.//Elim area pastors' mtg. p.m.

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