

## September 1, 2011      VIEWING THE YOUNG THROUGH 3D GLASSES

Dear *Friends & Family*,

**(8/8)** As I prepare for my fourth & final camp this summer, I do so with a bit of sadness. It was an absolute delight to be able to do four camps this year instead of my usual two. A high honor & sacred privilege that accompanied them was that two of them involved children as young as six years old. Normally, my annual jr. camps youngest aged campers are nine. The sadness entailed has to do with how fast the summer rushed by, surely because of being so busy & preoccupied with these various & sundry camps, not to mention other ministry engagements. I've often said that it's impossible to effectively minister to the young without vision otherwise, your ministry to them will basically be reduced to entertaining, playing with, or babysitting them. I have tried thru the years to view children in three stages, or dimensions, if you will. The first is to view them as they presently are: children. The next stage I try to envision them in is young adulthood, with children of their own. The final, & perhaps most sobering stage, is to picture them in my mind as feeble & frail aged senior citizens in a nursing home, close to the grave. This little mental exercise I sometimes do for vision to minister is highly effective, as it produces an ache in me to give them everything I've got, to take advantage of this ultra-precious stage of their lives, while they're still tender, before the hard-heartedness sets in. When you envision them near **the grave**, the depth of that ache in your spirit even intensifies. Oh God, if Jesus tarries & You graciously allow each of these little ones to live a long life, & we know no one is guaranteed that from You, every one of them is going to spend eternity somewherean eternity that is final, irrevocable, sealed, with no hope of alteration. Oh God, please, help me reach them!

### END OF A FRIEND

The grave happens to be especially pertinent to me this morning, as I awoke to find our Maine Coon cat of ten years, a.k.a., **Ben Purr** (Yes, named after my favorite movie, Ben Hur) that he had died in his sleep, apparently of a heart attack. Anyone who has owned an animal knows the grief involved, given how attached we humans can & do become to them. My Honey, a.k.a., Kim, is his owner. I was his favorite as the cat books say. Kim is presently in OH, so I was left with the task of burying him alone. Fighting emotions of sadness & aches of missing him while I dug, a scripture came to mind that was so comforting. You will not leave His soul in hell, nor allow Your Holy One to see decay, which David prophesied of the Father's purpose & intent re: His Son, the Lord Jesus (Ps.16:10). What care the Father took of His dead Son, ensuring by His omnipotence, that Jesus would not remain there, not even long enough to begin decomposing, praise His name. Because I live, you also shall live (Jn.14:19).

### TRIPLE DELIGHT

Being an avid fan of Chinese food, I'm aware that a common dish served in Chinese restaurants is called Triple Delight, usually involving beef, shrimp, & chicken. I've recently had such fare in another way. In my yearly reading through the Bible, I just finished the book of Acts

yesterday. What enhanced my reading of it, besides some accompanying commentaries, was having the TV miniseries in my Bible movie collection, Peter & Paul, which is 30 years old this year. I loved seeing on the screen what I read in the text. The movie covers most of Acts & is well-documented. Well, after reading Acts during the day & watching the movie while eating dinner (Kims is in OH), I'd then go to bed & list-en to it via my Bible In Living Sound series on CD. When I was a single man & a baby Christian in 1976, I purchased this set (75 record albums back then) for about \$200. It was a lot of \$ for me back then (& now!), but my thinking was, I'll invest in this instead of a TV set. Hence, I got Acts in three venues. It's a wonderful way to inculcate The Word into your heart & mind.

## LOST EXPERTS IN THE TRUTH

While in Acts, I was once again struck how much human beings can know & see re: the truth, & exude such religious & spiritual interest, fervor, & acumen, & yet still not in a way that results in the salvation of their souls. I have written about this before, re: the rich young ruler, the crowds who went in search of Jesus (only for a free meal!) after the feeding of the 5,000, the entertainment-seeking audience of Ezekiel, King Herod's fear, infatuation, & respect of John the Baptist, the rocky soil hearers, the tares, etc. And yet, this quite common phenomenon in human beings never quite ceases to intrigue me & cause me to marvel. Two more such cases were the Roman procurator Felix, whom Paul cited as one having a more *exact knowledge about* The Way (24:22), who also heard Paul preach re: righteousness, self-control, & the judgment to come (vs.25) & became frightened, which indicates he *was believing* what he heard! And yet the text says at the same time *he was hoping that money would be given to him* by Paul, therefore he used to send for him *quite often* & converse with him (!) (vs.26). This is dumb-founding, Beloved absolutely dumbfounding, but once again reveals the hopeless estate of the human heart, which, though bound by sin, is still helplessly religious & spiritually inquisitive. Later Paul cites King Agrippa as one who is an expert in all customs & questions among the Jews (26:3) & also one who believes in the Prophets (vs.27). He asserted this to the king right after Agrippa heard one of Paul's most powerful sermons ever recorded. The king's reply was merely: Do you think that in such a short time I can persuade me to become a Christian? (vs.28). Argh! Paul had just recited to Agrippa that Jesus had appeared to him & given the Apostle the ministry of opening blind eyes & turning people from the dominion of Satan (vs.18), & yet, when Agrippa left Paul he chatted with the procurator Festus re: Paul's estate & fate *instead of his own!* When I read the last verse of that chapter re: Agrippa's comment to Festus, i.e., This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar, I could not help but think, Oh Agrippa, YOU might have been set free, if you had listened to Paul & appealed to Jesus!. As with so many, this Idumean king was so close to eternal life, as was Felix, but, oh, so far. Texts like these in the Holy Scriptures make me, whom God has called to preach the gospel, just ache with fervor & passion, endeavoring my listeners to get it, at all costs. Of course, I know I cannot. I would despair even further without the ultra-consoling truth to us preachers: No man can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me enables (Jn.6:65) & draws (6:44) them.

## LIGHTS OFF SOMEBODY HOME!

**(8/10)** I arrived home yesterday from my monthly camp board meeting in PA to discover we had two tornadoes in the area while I was gone. This resulted in a NINE-HOUR power outage! In the 15 years we have lived in DE, the longest blackout I can recollect was about 2 hours. We never know how addicted to comfort we are until its gone. I once again realized to my shame what a failure I would be as a *foreign* missionary, apart from our Lords *great* grace! I made a makeshift bed in our basement for the coolness of it, from two chair cushions. While lying there, I tried to worship the Lord in my heart, realizing this could be much, much worse, a.k.a., the plight of the East Africans right now! As I lay there, I prayed for the power company men, surely scrambling to restore power as quickly as possible. Yes, there was surely self-interest in that prayer! My thoughts as I lay there pondering the situation were, Oh Father, we so dont deserve for You to turn the power back on. I ask You Father to do so, *solely because* of Who You are! You are good, Lord. Youre so good to the wicked sons of men. My, how we take things for granted. This being the week before my last camp, which equals tons of administrative work, I just thought of my computer, with emails piling up during the blackout. All of the sudden, I heard one of the most beautiful sounds in the world: the hum of our dehumidifier in the basement. Surely, it was in the key of D! How grateful I was. The next morning, lying in bed, I mused, with our gracious God in mind, Oh Father, how grievous it must have been for You to graciously decide to allow the power to come back on. I know it meant for You, Oh Lord, countless human beings in our area immediately interfacing with TV & computer screens, their ears heartily absorbing the wicked party spirit of the world via various & numerous radio stations, etc., vilely offending or ignoring You, which is almost as severe, w/no thoughts of gratitude for restoring this gift of electric power to us. Oh Father, how so very gracious of You! Kim & I thank you beyond words for your words of encouragement, prayers, & support to keep going.

Michael and Kim