

*PLEASE UNSUBSCRIBE from our newsletter if you don't have time or interest to read it! We don't want to send you something you don't want or just delete! I myself have unsubscribed from SEVERAL ministry publications, both e & snail mail, as we all cannot read everything!

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

September 1, 2008

Dear Friends & Family, **“DO NOT FORSAKE ME WHEN I AM OLD...”**

I returned home late last night from the airport, after having visited my ailing parents for a few days. My father has Parkinson's disease, my mother Alzheimer's. They are now not what they used to be. My father always had raven black curly hair—his nickname in college was “Curly”. He could always do anything, so we his children thought. Now, he is old, weak, winded, slow & weak of speech, tired, feeble, gray, fearful, & lonely. My mother was a beautiful woman. She was very sharp intellectually, quick-witted & humorous like her mother. Now, mom just sits & stares & forgets things in a matter of minutes. She gave my father six children & denied herself daily for our sakes'. Now, though she is surrounded by many other elderly folks in a condition similar to hers, she often relates of how lonely she is.

Although I was tremendously impressed with the nursing home that my mother is in, re: the kindness & warmth of its staff, from the administrators right down to the maintenance men, my initial reaction was one of depression, as I saw my mother in a room filled with wheelchair ridden “gray-heads”. Mom is one of the few who is still ambulatory. “What does this say to you, Michael?” Oh, I'll tell you. Oh, the ravages of sin! As I've said a number of times in previous newsletters, it only took “one man, one piece of fruit, one bite, one time”, to bring the devastation of aging, sickness, disease, & death to the entire human race. I later mused concerning this nursing home that, if I ever “ran one”, I'd want it inundated, immersed, & saturated with the Word of God, night & day. I'd want Scripture & the hope that it affords everywhere—on the walls, in the hearts of the staff, ringing through the sound system in song. When you have a considerably large group of people (or only 1 for that matter!) on the precipice of eternity, from which there is no return, they *must* have access & constant exposure to the Word of God! **“I MAJOR...IN MINERS”**

What makes this visit to my aging parents so poignant & striking to me personally, is that it was an “end cap” of one of the busiest summers of my life re: ministering to the young. “Michael, why do you do what you do?” Well, for vision's-sake, I have often pictured in my mind a roomful of children that I would minister to, re: what they would be, where they would be, etc., in just a few “moments” compared to the “eternal calendar”. I see the little girls as married women, with children of their own. I see the little boys as fathers, encompassed with the cares, anxieties, & burdens of life. I then become aware of the tremendous honor, blessing, & privilege given to me by God to have this “window of opportunity” to reach them with the gospel, while they are still young, still relatively tender. “When I was a boy, still tender, my father taught me...” (Pr.4:3,4). I had planned in this newsletter to relate to you a typical day of camp & why I do them, but a dear brother & friend in the Lord, Derek Forsberg, who is our church's main worship leader, beat me to it. Derek has helped me for years at camp with my “director's skit”, which is always one of my favorite parts of the program. His three children have all been campers & have also helped me re: counseling too. He emailed me the following recently, after having sat in on our Sunday evening “Camp Staff Vision” meeting, the evening before the campers arrive. At the risk of being vain, I very humbly convey what Derek wrote to you. Given my love & respect for him, it means so very much to me, & I think very accurately describes what our kind Father graces me to do. If Father pulls this grace away, I immediately “deflate”.

“Really appreciated what you shared with the counselors on Sun. night (at Jr. Camp). You have such a great way of putting the Word out there in bite-size pieces.

As I listened to you, I imagined you as a miner—like in the television movie 'Jessica' (I think)

—the story of the toddler in Texas who fell into a 9 inch drain pipe in her backyard in a split, one leg up, one down. It took a major effort involving a number of drilling companies and emergency personnel to free her after many hours. They ended up drilling a hole parallel to the pipe, then digging horizontally over to it. One after the other, these miners would be lowered down, then shimmy into the small horizontal shaft to dig thru rock, closer to the pipe until the point of exhaustion. You remind me of one of those guys (in the Spirit).

You have the guts, the skill & the calling to venture into the depths of humanity where few go or desire to go. You work in confined quarters with limited resources under extremely adverse conditions, despite your physical/mental/emotional state at the time. Then you emerge from the depths—caked with mud, totally exhausted, completely spent—but, in your hands is the soul of the one child you went after—saved for all eternity. He who saves souls is wise. That, you do.

That, you are. “D” (my nickname for Derek) **“A GLORIOUS ‘REMINDER’ OF FORGIVEN SIN”**

My dear brother & friend, Derek, conveyed quite vividly & accurately what ministry is & has been for me in the 23+ years I have been honored to do it. I hope so very much it is our Father’s kind will to have it continue, despite my incredible weaknesses & handicaps. I’m learning to view such as God’s “windows of opportunity” in me, as my strengths only shut the windows & close the doors to others seeing HIS!

I would like to continue my “series”, re: correcting popular Christian “myths” that have circulated for years. Again, I assert virtually all of them are “well-intended”! **Myth: “Justified” means ‘just-as-if-I’d never sinned’**. To be justified before God is to be accepted as righteous, having had your sins forgiven via Jesus’ blood, & having had His precious perfect righteousness imputed or transferred to you. The just demands of God’s Law, calling for your death, have been satisfied by Christ Jesus, as the perfect substitutionary sacrifice for your sin. God has, & never will view His people as if they had “never sinned”. Why not? This would rob Him of His glorious attribute of forgiveness. “There is forgiveness with You, therefore You are feared”(Ps.130:4). “He who is forgiven much, loves much” (Lk.7:47). When Eph.1:1-14 relates the unfathomable grace of the Three Persons of the Godhead in the salvation of His people, three times it relates God’s “bottom-line” reason why: “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (vv.6,12,14). Were God’s forgiveness of His peoples’ sins not referred to & recognized for all eternity, the major wellspring of worshipful response on their part would be removed! “Worthy is the Lamb that was *slain*...!”(Rev.5:6) will be sung before His throne. Jesus is seen in eternity in Revelation as a Lamb that had been “slain”. His wounds in eternity will forever remind His Church of the horrific cost of their sin, God’s absolute glorious holiness & justice, & of His wondrous love to have His Only Son endure His wrath on their behalf, & hence making forgiveness possible. We will be viewed not as if we had never sinned, but as those whose God’s truly free & voluntary forgiveness were lavished upon, at Christ Jesus’ expense!

Kim & I are so very grateful to you who read, encourage, pray, and/or give to help us continue His work.

Michael

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[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 in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

Ministry/events for SEPTEMBER & those not listed in last month’s newsletter:

Sept. 2: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: camp board mtg.//pastors’ mtg. @ Petra

Sept. 5-12: Morgantown, WV, Cleveland, OH: White wedding; visit our son & family

Sept. 18: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim area pastors' mtg.

Sept. 19: Hopewell Network Camps' Annual Fund-raising banquet-Shady Maple, E. Earl, PA