

September 1, 2009

"CAMPERS, GOD, DOCTRINE, & CONVICTION"

Dear Friends & Family,

(8/17) I returned home this past Friday night around midnight after having served our Lord & His young again at our annual Jr. Camp. This summer marks my 26th year of camp ministry in general, & my 19th at Tel Hai, having just completed my 39th camp there.

I ministered to the camp staff the Sunday night before the campers arrived. I felt acutely burdened to emphasize that the camp's "worth" to God, the campers, history, & eternity was directly proportionate to the *content* of the messages preached. If an archaeologist were to come to camp a thousand years from now & dig up artifacts from our time there a millennium before, the only archaeological "finds" of true value would be how clearly & accurately we rightly divided the Word of Truth. A person's connection to the golden anchor of hope we find in our Savior is only as secure as the truthfulness & biblical accuracy of the "content" of the messages they have believed about Him. Well, as the week progressed, I was sweetly amazed re: the content of the messages taught & preached. For our morning & evening chapels, we had eight different speakers, representing five different churches. The various themes of their messages included: avoiding a seared conscience, The Kingdom of God, a survey of the Book of Acts, the nature of grace, propitiation (i.e., the removal of God's wrath from off of His people in it being diverted to the Savior), & redemption (the freeing of a slave by the payment of a ransom) the blood-covenant from Gen. 15, & two messages on suffering. The aforesaid list is "deep" & "heavy" for adults—yet, they were preached to 9-12 year olds! Once again, as in so many years before, our God graced the camp with long periods of "response" to these rich truths from His Word. When the Word preached is Jesus-centered & rightly divided, it is a sure "given" that God's presence by His Spirit will come! Presumption? Hardly! It was the Holy Spirit Who graced & enabled the ministers of the Word to do so in the first place! Night after night, many of the children would come forward & lay on their faces in a prostrate position before the Lord, responding to His Word & His Spirit. One of our evening speakers said that the most common way to pray cited in the Old Testament was *on your face*. Wow. That consoled me, as I often find it difficult to stand, or even talk for that matter, after having had seen Jesus' face through His Written Word! I've often said that the main purpose of this particular camp was to teach children & teenagers how to spend extended periods of time at the Lord's feet listening to His Word, & *enjoying it!* That is what I have seen Him do, so sweetly & graciously, for so many years. "The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh (Tel Hai), & revealed Himself to Samuel (us) by the *word* of the Lord" (I Sam. 3:21).

"A SPOONFUL OF 'SUGAR' HELPS THE DOCTRINE(?) GO DOWN"

OR

"THE 'GOS-PILL' IN A CAPSULE"

Given the depth, weight, & glory of the doctrines cited above, & the impossible task of inculcating them into children apart from God's enabling grace, we felt, as always at camp, to have as much relationship as possible with the teenagers & children before ministering to them. Hence, camp has always been "the best of both worlds", re: intense fun & intense spirituality. I encouraged the staff on Sunday night to come & be children again. "Why, Michael? Why be children again?" Uh, because I like to, *and* because it greatly enhances the receptivity of the children re: the Word of God. They're more apt to listen to you when they are certain that you love them, & like them. Yes, I totally understand that ultimately, it is God & God alone Who sovereignly, & graciously, enables any human, who is hostile to Him by nature if unsaved, to hear & respond to His Word! He has mercy upon those whom He decides to have mercy, & He hardens those who He chooses to harden (Rom. 9:18). As well, I told the staff Sunday night, & it was hard to bring myself to say it then, as it is hard to bring myself to type it now, that every single soul who will be condemned

to an eternity of torment in the Lake of Fire, which burns with God's holy, consuming, justly-deserved fire & sulfur, was at one time in their existence—a *child!* There is much work to do here, Beloved...much work. So, what *is* this “capsule” mentioned above, that we put the gospel in at camp? What is this “sugar”, that helps it go down? Absolute & complete hysteria is one way to describe it! Our “sugar capsule” in-cludes puppet shows, Bible games, costumed-characters (which included everything from a “Cellular Pun” telephone repair man, to “human bananas”, to a very bad tap dancer (Your Truly), to the Energizer Bunny, to Willie Wonka, an Oompa Loompa, a robot, an astronaut, very bad puns & jokes, balls flying around in morning chapel with old-TV themes from the 60's & 70's & sound effects intermittently playing, skits, dramas designed to be “mini-epics” to “make the Scriptures come alive”, etc... And, as always with Jr. Camp, we had an airplane scheduled to arrive to drop candy from the sky. To my very deep regret, though, this surprise had to be canceled for our God's wise reasons, as His weather prevented our pilots from doing so! His Name be praised! He doeth all things well! Hence, this was camp last week in a nutshell, er, I mean, “capsule”. I trust that now you might understand a bit more clearly as to why I “live for it” to come around again in a year! May it be so. **“UNDERGIRDING THE GUERTINS”** ☺

It is a consoling thing to know, what while I'm away at camp, pouring out my heart & soul day & night in our Lord's high-calling upon my life, that is, to preach His gospel, that He also touches the hearts of some of you to support us with your prayers, encouraging notes, & financial gifts. It just doesn't happen if He doesn't do so. Thank you for being sensitive & faithful to obey what He speaks to your heart. As always, it is a personal “ache” of mine to prove worthy of it.

Love in the Christ, “The Lord of all who rule as lords” (Literal Greek, NASB).

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 makes his living & supports his family & ministry by preaching God's Word & through faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

Ministry/events for September & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Aug. 23: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: “Flashpoint” worship-drummer

Aug. 25: Come Alive Church, Medford, NJ: VBS service-elementary kids

Sept. 1: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: HNC board mtg.//pastors' mtg.

Sept. 3: Downingtown, PA:HNC camps' directors' mtg.

Sept. 4: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Warehouse “lock-in”. drummer/preacher

Sept. 6: Living Word Fellowship, Allentown, PA: Sunday morning adult service

Sept. 13: The Rock Church, Pitman, NJ: Sunday morning family service

Sept. 18: Shady Maple Restaurant, East Earl, PA: HNC Banquet: drama & vision-casting

News/Needs/Recent Reading: by the time you receive this, Lord willing, I will have received my 1st ever back-injection. It will be a nerve-block to help alleviate the left-leg numbness & pain re: sitting *Living For God's Glory*, by Joel Beeke, © 2008 Reformation Trust Press

***Biblical Theology*, by Gerhaard Vos, © 1948 Eerdmans**

***Our 3rd annual Hopewell Network Camp Fund-Raising Banquet! Fri.9/18/09: 6:30pm @ Shady Maple Restaurant, East Earl, PA. Worship, slides/video, “Time Machine” drama, etc**

Call "Jane" @ (610) 779-7478 for more details! It is a WONDERFUL time together! 😊