

October 1, 2013

Dear Friends & Family,

### **“SPIRITUAL SCHIZOPHRENIA?”**

(9/24) I’ve recently been preaching re: the gospel & the odds against it “taking hold” in people’s lives. These odds are: the power of The Adversary, the weakness of the men God calls to preach it, Jesus’ demands of discipleship [true saving faith], i.e., of denying one’s self, daily cross-bearing, & entrusting control of your life into the hands of “Another”, which are exactly opposite of what our fallen human nature both desires & is controlled by. Lastly, the 4<sup>th</sup> odd is the uncanny ability, in the light of human inability to respond to the gospel unaided by God, for humans to “interact” with the Word of God yet not be converted by it.

### **“FROM AMAZED TO ENRAGED”**

There are prolific instances in [Scripture](#) of this latter “odd” listed above, i.e., of humans interacting with & responding “favorably” [at least initially] to God’s Son, His presence, His miraculous power, & His Word. I was reminded of this afresh this morning while reading in Luke’s gospel, chapter four. When Jesus came to His home town of Nazareth not long after commencing His ministry, He read from the prophet Isaiah & concluded by saying that He was the fulfillment of what was clearly a Messianic portion of that prophecy. The synagogue’s inhabitants’ initial response was one of *awe & wonder*, re: the gracious words that came from His lips. *In a matter of seconds*, however, their fleshly human reasoning took over, & they began to *think too much*. They followed the pattern of the human race in general when Paul indicted it in Romans 1, “although they *knew* God, they *neither* [there’s the deliberate choice on their part] glorified Him as God, nor gave thanks” (Rom.1:21). In the same way, those present in Jesus’ hometown synagogue that fateful day, *chose* to “give in” to their fallen human reasoning & faulty presuppositions [cf. Luke 3:23-Jesus “being supposedly” the son of Joseph]. They immediately demeaned Him by saying, “Is not *this*’ {notice the verbal body-slam, re: not even having the courtesy to call Jesus “He”?} the son of Joseph?” It’s heart-sickening to ponder that in the very next town that Jesus visits, *a demon*, unlike His Own hometown neighbors & relatives, addresses Him for Who He is, “The Holy One of God!” Jesus, knowing human nature as He did, & hence not trusting any man {Jn.2:24,25}, said, “No doubt” they would reject Him. At first glance it appears as if the Son of God is deliberately trying to pick a fight & to incite the resultant riot, when He tells them in their own Jewish history recorded

in their sacred Torah, that God sent *Elijah & Elisha only* to Gentile people who were in need of healing & provision, even though there were *many in Israel* at the time who had the same needs! The text in verse 28 says, “When they heard these things they were **all filled with rage** & drove Him out of the city. They then led Him to the brow of a hill in order to “throw Him down” [I could not help but wonder at this point if this was **the devil’s** attempt at “payback time”, for Jesus’ having ordered **Michael & his angels** to throw him out of Heaven so many millennia before (Rev.12:9)]. It is also very sad that shortly thereafter, after Jesus arrived in Capernaum, he exorcised **a demon** out of a man in the synagogue, & upon exiting, it “threw him down”. Did thoughts arise in the Savior’s mind of His Own hometown residents’ recently trying to “throw Him down” a cliff?

### **“MY PLACE OR YOURS?”**

In this context, the text (vs.29) refers to Nazareth as “their” city, i.e., the inhabitants of the synagogue. How insightful & “prophetic”(?) this statement was that the Holy Spirit had Luke record. When one pushes The Son of God out of their midst, it is because there has taken place, sometime, somewhere, a transfer of ownership in that said place. It can happen in some monumental moment of crisis or valley of decision, but usually it happens over time, somewhat like the proverbial “frog in a pot” analogy, gradually taking place due to several decisions being made re: “pushing Jesus out”. What was originally “His” place [in this particular case, His Own hometown], had become “their” place. Perhaps the most familiar & most striking, was when Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Jerusalem was *His* city-the city of the Great King (Ps.48). The temple was His Father’s House (Mt.21:13). But, due to the Jews’ repeated rejection of Him & His Father, it had become “theirs”. “Behold, *your* house is left to you desolate”. (Mt. 23:38). Similarly, Jesus had delivered & cured the **Gadarene demoniac**, by sending the legion of demons out of him into some nearby **swine**, whereby they rushed into the nearby lake & drowned, thus bringing to an end their owners’ livelihood. It then says, “they began to *implore* Him to leave *their* region” (Mk.5:17). And, He did. They kept “*their* region”. They kept it intact. They kept it the way it was. They kept it the way *they* wanted it. They did so despite the fact that The Father had graced them with a divine visitation & manifestation courtesy of His Son. He gave them what *they* wanted: He left. I have observed this very sobering principle now for decades. It is one of the most frightening & sobering things I have ever witnessed— i.e., God leaving a person or people group *to themselves, to their sin,*

to their traditions. Churches, denominations, & ministries, once vibrant with the life-giving gospel, are now either dead or embarrassing facsimiles of what they once were, because His place, became “their” place. May He help us.

### “GOD’S ‘FORT KNOX’”

This past week I preached to a young adults’ group out of town. The theme I was asked to connect to was Rom.12: 1, 2. “Therefore, I urge you, *by the mercies of God*, to present your bodies a living & holy sacrifice” “ I have heard countless preachers cite this text in their noble effort to exhort God’s people to render due surrender to Him. However, I can’t recall one who elaborated on the “mercies of God” that are the basis & motivation given by the Holy Spirit through Paul to do so. I’ve written before that we preachers are not “authorized” to do so by God, i.e., to jump right to 12:1,2, if we have not first expounded re: the mercies in the previous chapters as Paul did. Amazingly, Paul could have just charged the Roman Christians to completely yield to God because, well, He is **GOD!** As GOD He *deserves* full surrender by His people every millisecond of their day. But Paul doesn’t base consecration on that. Nor does he base it on God’s judgment, which will be sure & meticulous re: every person re: how they lived their lives to please Him (II Cor.5:9, 10). Rather, he bases it on God’s *mercies*. That would be His mercies specifically enumerated & elaborated in the previous chapters of the epistle. I surveyed the actual word “mercy” & found it was mentioned 4X in chapter 11, but 5X in chapter 9. [Of course, mercy can be in view & is even without the actual word being used]. Hence, I felt I would stuff these students with as much of “the mercies of God” as I could. The mercies are the nuclear reactor that provides the desire to surrender as 12:1 calls for. We love God because He first loved us (I Jn.4:9). We bless God in worship, because He first blessed us (Eph.1:3). We love God much because He first forgave us of much (Lk. 7:47). And, we chose God because He first chose us (Eph.1:4). He will never surrender the initiative nor “first place” to us [or, should I say, “the first move”?] in anything that pertains to our salvation. If He did, we would get the credit for it. He is zealously protective of His glory & will not give it to another (Isa.42:8). Even the repentance (Rom.2:4; Acts 11:18; II Tim. 2:25) & faith (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29) necessary for salvation are a “grant” from Him! A “gold mine” of mercy which precedes the call for 12:1’s yielding is Rom. 8:29, 30: otherwise known as “**The Golden Chain**” of salvation, or “**God’s Fort Knox**”, if you will. It encompasses a Christian’s salvation from **eternity past** when God foreknew, or set His affection

upon them, **all the way to eternity future**, where God glorifies them. This leads right into Rom. 9, which I call the “**nuclear** chapter” of Romans. It is nuclear, as, when one “gets it”, “fuel-rods” of comfort, faith, & strength and wells of deep worship are placed in the Christian that they never knew. Or, this precious & sadly, “controversial” chapter [John Piper once asked, “What doctrine in the Bible that is worth anything is *not* controversial?”] can cause one to have a “meltdown”, as it punches one right in the face with its head-on collision with human pride, refusing man any part [ultimately] in the destiny of his soul. It is pure mercy, pure sovereign grace on God’s part. We know this is what the chapter is repeatedly & emphatically teaching with various & numerous examples from Scripture by the expected *objections* that *Paul himself* brings up, knowing human nature, & hence his audience like he does! But, it is this same mercy that God, of His Own free will & good-pleasure chooses to have on “whomsoever He wills”. This is the incentive for Christians to yield their all to Him as they ponder these sobering yet glorious truths that they, due to God’s purpose alone, are vessels of His mercy. If God’s mercy upon them has anything to do with them, then it isn’t mercy. Yielding one’s body as a living sacrifice is “easy” the more one understands & contemplates these bursting-with-grace portions of Romans.

### (9/28) “POST TIME!” or “WIN-PLACE-SHOW”

Well, it’s been over a month now since the history books have been closed on the summer camp season of **2013** but, not forever! Just as I endeavor each year to have a post-camp directors’ debriefing meeting, so, on **The Great Day** when I give an account to “**THE Director**”, the books will be opened again, & He & I will go over everything concerning them. In the light of “books”, **Facebook** posts are like our computers, & jr. Highers you either love ‘em or hate ‘em. Whether one loves or hates FB, it has become invaluable to us directors each year as camp approaches, as through it we have “front row seats” to the hearts of many of God’s people, particularly to camp staff applicants. How in the world does FB reveal a person’s **heart**? This past camp pre-season, we had a young lady apply to counsel. I vaguely remembered her, as it had been many years since she attended as a camper. I remember her being very sweet. However, when I went to her FB page to “read her heart”, any inclinations I might have had re: having her come & pour into the lives of the young quickly abated. Why? Every FB “Like” she had was “of the world”, earthly, carnal, etc. [On the other hand, there was not one post, reference, or mention re: anything re: the Lord]. Obviously, what she posted, she liked-she had affections & affinity for. These TV programs & movies “won” her

affections. They were “winners” in her eyes-& ears. There is an expression in horse racing, re: after a race, re: which horses came in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, & 3<sup>rd</sup> place: “Win, Place, Show”. The same expression can be applied to the hearts of people, & in this context, God’s people. When we allow something “into” us, via our eyes & ears, if there is something in us that is impressed by it, it “wins” a place in our hearts. It consequently finds a “place” in our hearts, & often becomes very deep-seated, which is actually idolatry. In turn, it is impossible then not to “show” it, i.e., to think & speak about it to others; hence, to “show” it, or, in FB terms, to “post” it. The Lord Jesus Christ, Who knew the hearts of all men & how they “ticked”, said this Himself: “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Mt.12:34). Given the way we are wired, it is impossible for this not to happen. As a “result” I had to ask the question re: the potential applicant: “What will she have to pour out into her little girls, since, obviously, most (?) of what she was ‘taking in’, was worldly input?” I dare say “most”, because, again, according to Jesus, what comes out of us is proportionate to what comes into us. Hence, I didn’t consider her as a potential applicant. It doesn’t mean she doesn’t love God, by any means. But I do know this—if you get one’s *affections*? You get their direction, & their “projections”. May He direct our hearts into the love of GOD, Who alone deserves it.

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***"Caboose!" on the Loose!"***

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

- Sept. 11: Christian Assembly, Shaker Heights, OH: whole-family service**
- Sept. 19: Life Community Church, Newark, DE: EMF pastors' mtg.**
- Sept. 20: Schorn Residence, Hockessin, DE: IC home-fellowship group**
- Sept. 29: Immanuel Christian Fellowship, Manheim, PA: Sun. a.m. whole-family service**
- Oct. 1: Petra Christian Fellowship, New Holland, PA: hsc camp board mtg.**
- Oct. 9: Petra Christian Fellowship, Hew Holland, PA: Hopewell Network Jubilee! Conference: children's service minister**
- Oct. 17: Wilmington, DE: EMF pastors' mtg.**
- Oct. 23: New Covenant Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim Fellowship pastors' mtg.**
- Oct. 30: IC, Wilmington, DE: Kids' Kandy Karnival game booth operator**
- Oct. 16, 23, 24: My birthday, mine & Kim's 36th anniversary, & Kim's birthday respectively**

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