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\*Note: I returned home late last night from my annual sr. hi. camp. I would love to write about the week but today is the 1<sup>st</sup> & I'm just too exhausted recuperating from it. This newsletter I wrote months ago but never published. I hope it instructs & blesses. Gratefully, Michael

July 2017

**“WELL-THEIR INTENTIONS WERE GOOD!”**



Dear **Friends & Family**,

I saw something some months ago on social media that I know was intended to be an encouraging quote to encourage God's people, & rightly so. The more I pondered it though the more I saw that the author of the quote, *surely with good intentions*, could be taken the wrong way. I wanted to offer some thoughts. They are interspersed with the quote below. **Sin-consciousness empowers the law of performance** [This isn't always the case. Sin-consciousness can be a very healthy, God-given awareness, via conscience & the Holy Spirit's conviction. It can drive the sinner to the Savior. Without it, we surely perish. Seared consciences are eternally deadly. Every man of God who encountered The Most High- The Holy One in Scripture, in both Testaments, was absolutely overwhelmed with a consciousness of his own sin.] **& contradicts what grace reveals** [Yes, very true-if one dwells on their sin only, which sadly, many of us do. Sin & grace though are the “beautiful blend”, which is the daily experience of the Christian. A constant awareness of sin, *then coupled with* the realization of a super-abundant grace that forgives & eradicates it, is the divinely-ordained “formula” that keeps the Christian loving God. “He who is forgiven much, loves much.”]; **it inhibits any ground for meaningful friendship.** [Yes. One who focuses on their sin only cannot enjoy fellowship with The Godhead.] **A relationship based upon inferiority, guilt, suspicion or condemnation, has no future.** [very true!] **For friendship to be worth anything, innocence is a non-negotiable.** [This isn't necessarily so. A stronger bond of love & friendship is forged & maintained by The One offended continually forgiving the offender & giving to him His Own righteousness. Again, “he who is forgiven much, loves much.” We are not declared “innocent” as much as “acquitted & forgiven”.] **The innocence**

**Adam walked in before the fall is the same innocence that Christ enjoys in union with his Father,** [However, this is simply not the case. Adam's innocence was that of a finite, created being "not having sinned". Christ's "innocence" is never put in these terms, except when referring to His inevitable resistance to sin & Satan's temptations. Christ's righteousness is exponentially higher & more glorious than Adam's innocence, being based in His Deity & the infinitely perfect attributes thereof.] **& is now the restored privilege of every man.** [? I want to believe the author is not insinuating Universalism all too common heretical doctrine embraced by Unitarians & various well-known [unfortunately] preachers & theologians, both past & present who assert all humanity will eventually wind up in Heaven.] **Every accusation against man has been canceled; mankind** [? Again, language & statements such as could lead readers into believing the author embraces Universalism. *Christians alone* stand free of any accusation due to Christ's blood-shedding, atoning intervention & High Priestly intercession.] **stands fully vindicated and acquitted. The prodigal son is not out on probation** [Hallelujah. Very true. Interestingly enough, last month I portrayed the Prodigal Son out of my Time Machine & preached on that text to young children in our church! :0)]; **he stands justified in his father's love** [Well, it's much more than "in his father's love"-it is *grounded* in the Father's zeal to glorify Himself & His Son in the highest possible way, & in His great love for His people (Eph.2:4,7), but God's "love" alone cannot justify-the justification comes via the blood & death of His Son in His people's place-sin must be punished for the sinner to be acquitted, forgiven, & justified.] **just as if he had never sinned!** [Sadly, this *well-intended* but grievously wrong statement has been preached, written, & published so often by so many of God's people who were seriously & sincerely attempting to extol His love & grace. However, in actuality it does the opposite-it removes one of the greatest of the Divine attributes from the purview of His people for all of eternity. Christians are never viewed "just as if they had never sinned". Many have propounded this statement via a play on words, viz, "justified" = "just" (as if) "I'd" never sinned. It's pithy, clever, short, & full of theological significance. Unfortunately, it isn't biblical. Again, love for God from *fallen* creatures is rooted in His initial love for them [I Jn.4:19]. It is deepened by an awareness of what it cost this divine love *to be able to* forgive them! Forgiven people are loving people. We will be eternally reminded that we have been forgiven via The Lamb in Revelation "looking as if it had been *slain*." [Rev. 5:6]. This highlights & extols the grace of God like no other. Forgiveness was an *option* with the divine mercy. As with Israel, He chose to set His affection on Christians. He was under no obligation. Adoption, sonship, & eternal fellowship with The Godhead is all possible due to His *forgiveness* of our horrendously offensive & incalculable sins against Him. To look upon us "as if we had never sinned" would be to do so viewing us as Adam in his pre-fallen state. However, the righteousness Christians possess & enjoy is exponentially higher than Adam's state of innocence. It is the very righteousness of God [Rom.3:21; II Cor.5:21].

## “THE WRATH BACK-DROP”



Along these lines, most people know by now how much I detest the toning down of the gospel & the avoidance of the “severe” truths of God [Rom.9:22], which, by the way, are absolutely adorable, by way too many churches in our country trying to accommodate the lost & increase attendance. They avoid the weightier issues of life & death, God's justice, holiness, wrath, judgment, eternal punishment, et al, as if there was something wrong with them. Hence, their churches fill. However, because we are a *fallen* race, this issues, given Who God is, *must* be addressed continually. He *must* judge & punish but He isn't obligated to forgive & save. This is what makes the latter by Him so amazing. His gospel of grace & mercy, to be truly & fully understood, & *truly appreciated*, *must* be showcased on the stage & against the backdrop of His holiness, justice, & wrath.

## “HEREIN IS LOVE”



Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins [HSCB]. Notice how the Holy Spirit through John defines God's love, particularly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> clause: "...& sent His Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins. Propitiation: the removal of *wrath* by the offering of a sacrifice. It is an act of appeasing, satisfying, & removing God's *wrath* from off of His people & placing it upon His Darling of Heaven-the Man Christ Jesus. God's wrath is intimately involved with & intertwined with His love. Again, given that we are fallen, it is *part* of the definition! To remove His wrath from the context & discussion of His love is to remove it [& Him!] from the context & thus greatly misrepresent & demean Him! It removes the great cost & high price He Himself paid on our behalf. May He help us to see this, & return a much-deeper love to Him, based in the untold blessing of being *forgiven*, never just "innocent". Amen.



*Caboose! On the Loose:*

Ministry/Events for **JULY** & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

July 3: Elverson, PA: hsc board mtg.

July 15-21: Tel Hai Camp, hsc jr. hi. camp, Honey Brook, PA: pastoral director

July 24-28: Friends of the Cross Church, Corning, NY: Camp Victory: a.m. chapel speaker

July 30: Full Gospel Family Life Center, Lagrangeville, NY: 2 Sun. a.m. services

\*Michael is an ordained *Elim Fellowship* itinerant Stateside 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 as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet-this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485, marking it "Preferred-Michael Robert Guertin" or you may click on the link below to give directly.

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