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June 2017

“JAMES EDWARD GUERTIN LAID TO REST”



Dear Friends & Family,

[5/18] I returned home this past Sunday evening from Virginia where I went to conduct my father's internment service. He died on **March 11th** but the siblings & I felt it best to postpone his internment in hopes of better weather & also allowing friends & family more time to prepare to come. When Dad died he was just a few days shy of turning **91 & ½**. At his bedside vigil, my brother & 4 sisters would talk to him, pray for him, caress him, sing to him, laugh w/ each other at times, & also weep as we waited.

[Coincidentally, Mom had died on Dad's **84th** birthday]. Some of my sisters & I tried for decades to ensure Dad was right with the Lord. I'm the preacher in the family, but I am so very proud of my sisters for the boldness they exuded in the Lord as only a daughter with a father can (!) in en-treating, challenging, etc. him to be sure he was trusting in Jesus alone & not in his religion. I know my only daughter has a lot of sway with me. :-)
When dad finally passed in the middle of the night of **March 11th**, my brother Jimmy, the eldest of the siblings, & my sister Colette, under me [she's #4 of the 6], were there with him. I'm still processing that Dad is gone. When someone has been on the planet over 9 decades, one just assumes they're “still there”. Perhaps this is part of the grieving process. O, eternity is such a very, very, long time. Just pondering it for a few moments can put one on their face before the Lord on the floor.

“A TROPICAL STORM-& THE GOSPEL”



About 4 years ago, I was in FL visiting Dad. We had dinner at his favorite restaurant down there, a.k.a. “Brano's”, the owner of which was a close friend of Dad's. As we drove home in Dad's Buick Rendevous, which I have now, we were coming from Cocoa Beach towards Merritt Island where Dad lived. Across the panoramic view of the horizon, there was a massive tropical storm ahead of us. Huge, ominous thunderhead clouds were faintly visible in the dark, but when the lightning flashed, their immensity was clearly seen. It was an awesome & fearful display of God's power. The prophet Nahum said centuries ago that “the clouds are the dust of His feet” [Nah.1:3]. I said to Dad as we drove, attempting once more to reach him with the gospel, “Hey Dad? Just think-the same God Who is displaying all of that power right now is the same One Who allowed us to crucify His Son”. Dad listened. I then told him something to the effect of, “Do you know the first thing God will look for the second you die & stand before Him? He will look to see if you are absolutely perfect, with no stain of sin on you. He can only receive into His Kingdom & family those who are absolutely perfect. Of course, a sane man will exclaim the impossibility of this. Dad? You can go to Mass every day of your life, etc., & still not know Him. And who knows, Dad? I could die before you do. Nothing is guaranteed for any of us. The wonderful thing about the gospel is that the righteousness God must & does demand of everyone, He freely provides to those who believe on His Son. We've all seen religious people who don't live for Him the rest of the week...” Dad remained silent. We pulled up to the house & the conversation changed.

"A PLAYER PIANO & THE GOSPEL



A year ago last month Kim & I were in Dad's assisted living apartment with him. We both realized that he could be gone from us at any time, given his age & his many health issues. Since it was relatively rare that we get down to VA given our schedules here, we knew every opportunity to be with Dad & share the Lord with him were priceless. When we were children living in NJ I vividly remember having a player piano in our home. It is still in the family! Our childhood & teen years are sweetly seasoned with many family/relatives & friends' gatherings in our basement around that player piano. We had countless oldies, classics, & show tunes on piano rolls. In the midst of this repertoire' we had a hymn: *Rock Of Ages*. Along with *How Great Thou Art*, it was one of Dad's favorites. As Kim & I sat on each side of his easy chair & held his arms, I felt impressed of the Lord to "try again". When it's the eternal destiny of a soul, one can't be too sure. I asked Dad if he had ever pondered the words to this hymn in all of the decades he had heard & known it. He hadn't. I hadn't either, until a few years ago. It is replete with comfort & power. ROCK of Ages-Jesus. Who else? His permanence. His strength. His immutability. One Whom we must fall on & be broken to pieces, so that HE can put us back together again after His fashion. CLEFT for me. A cleft rock is a broken or split one. Christ Jesus was crushed, pierced, wounded, battered, etc. for us, with our sin upon Him. LET ME HIDE MYSELF IN THEE-I told Dad & the crowd at the internment that Jesus is the One Whom has been provided for us by the Father to hide in from His wrath that we deserve & that is to come. LET THE WATER & THE BLOOD FROM THY WOUNDED SIDE WHICH FLOWED BE OF SIN THE DOUBLE CURE-SAVE FROM WRATH & MAKE ME PURE-Jesus' side oozed forth two fluids, both signifying His life being poured out to pay sin's wages. It pacifies The Father's wrath which we so justly deserve & which the Son so freely absorbed in His people's place. It also cleanses, washes away, & expiates sin.

“DREADING DEATH”



I then told the crowd gathered at the graveside something they might have not known about Dad, after having heard several minutes of various family & friends sharing loving & sometimes funny memories of him. He was very afraid of death. In myself I am too. I've often referred to myself as a little boy in a man's body, who very much wants to remain a little boy. Death is the “great unknown”. None of us has ever been there before. I proceeded to a line further along in the hymn: WHEN I DRAW THIS FLEETING BREATH, WHEN MY EYES, THEY CLOSE IN DEATH, WHEN I SOAR TO WORLDS UNKNOWN, & BEHOLD THEE ON THY THRONE [or, THY JUDGMENT THRONE-another rendering]. I told the audience that Jimmy & Colette, as I mentioned above, were with Dad when he “drew his fleeting breath & his eyes closed in death.” And just as I told him that stormy night in FL en route home from the restaurant, surely, The Father looked for Jesus' righteousness, His A+ report card, if you will, as I teach it to children. He must, if He is to remain faithful to His Son, His excruciating work on the cross, & to His Own justice. I pray that Dad finally did what he had heard via the player piano & had been told by so many of his children so many times & for so many years. I pray for myself & for each of you reading this, that we all we say to The Lord Jesus, “let me hide myself in Thee”.

“DAD'S DEATH-->LIFE FOR HIS GRAVE DIGGERS?”



I wanted to be the 1st to the cemetery & the last to leave. I'm just that way. When I arrived for the ceremony, two Hispanic men were preparing the site for the ceremony. I greeted them & told them who I was & sincerely thanked them for serving us. They were very consoling. One told me his 13 year-old daughter was shot & killed in Houston some time back. The other told me his dad had died too. I hugged them both & spoke a little Spanish to them. After the ceremony, when everyone else had left, I was heading out of the cemetery when I felt impressed by the Lord to give these two men a gospel tract & tip. Thank God I had the cash on hand to do so. And, I happened to be in my truck, which is my itinerant ministry vehicle, which always has tracts in it. Once again I hugged & thanked them.

“GOOD In-TENT-ion”



I had mentioned above one of the major reasons we postponed Dad's internment was in the hope of better weather. Surely in May! Surely on Mother's Day weekend! It was not to be! Rain was called for the entire day, & at one point 100% chance! I was heartsick. I had prepared for this day in my mind & heart for many years, to be honest,

not expecting Dad to live as long as he did. Plus-there were so many family members & friends who were expected to come to this *outdoor* event [Dad didn't want a funeral service & Mass] whom I'm quite sure were in dire need of the Lord. It was a GOLDEN opportunity. And yet-here, the forecast was anything but conducive-cold & rainy. My siblings & I prayed. When everyone arrived, the idea was suggested to move out the 6 chairs set up for Dad's kids underneath a canopy, & squeeze all of the guests inside of it instead. It worked- & it truly made the presentation of the gospel, as I mentioned above, this *golden* opportunity to share the gospel, much more conducive as far as avoiding distractions was concerned. Our Lord also held off the rain. Now, may our God be pleased to water & give increase to the seeds that were planted. Goodbye, Dad. I love you. Michael

“SPEAKING OF 'ROCK'”



From the outset I had planned on reading some lyrics of the infamous, for decades Christian rock band “Petra” [“Rock” in Greek], namely, “Grave Robber”. I had them printed out & ready to read but given how many guests shared memories & thoughts re: Dad & the inclement weather, I decided not to. Given the topic & nature of this historical newsletter though, I feel this is the place to share it with you, my readers. As with so many of Petra's lyrics, they are so powerful & biblically based. I pray they comfort & strengthen you as they have me.

“GRAVE ROBBER”

There's a step that we all take alone
An appointment we have with the great unknown
Like a vapor this life is just waiting to pass
Like the flowers that fade, like the withering grass
But life seems so long and death so complete
And the grave an impossible portion to cheat

But there's One who has been there and still lives to tell
There is One who has been through both Heaven and hell
And the grave will come up empty-handed that day
Jesus will come and steal us away

Where is the sting, tell me where is the bite
When the grave robber comes like a thief in the night
Where is the victory, where is the prize
When the grave robber comes
And death finally dies

Many still mourn and many still weep
For those that they love who have fallen asleep
But we have this hope though our hearts may still ache
Just one shout from above and they all will awake
And in the reunion of joy we will see
Death will be swallowed in sweet victory

When the last enemy is gone from the dust will come a song
Those asleep will be awakened - not a one will be forsaken
He shall wipe away our tears - He will steal away our fears
There will be no sad tomorrow - there will be no pain and sorrow
[c. 1983 Bob Hartman]



Caboose! On the Loose:

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

June 6: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//Network pastors' mtg.

June 11: Maranatha Christian Fellowship, Berlin Campus, West Berlin, NJ: Sun. a.m. service

June 18: Hockessin Chinese Evangelical Community Church, Hockessin, DE: English service

June 21: Ogetown Baptist Church, Ogetown, DE: Al Demers ordination service

June 24-30: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: hsc sr hi camp-pastoral director

*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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