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March 2020

"A CONTROLLED BURN"



Dear **Friends & Family**,

[2/24] Kim & I arrived home yesterday afternoon from ministry at a church in the Atlantic City, N.J. area. While en route on the *Atlantic City Expressway*, I noticed those battery-operated lighted mobile highways signs more than once. Each one read: "Control Burn". Immediately my spirit was pricked, stunned, & grieved, I believe, by the Holy Spirit as He applied this caption to my heart re: much of today's Church. I ached inside as I pondered the sign, my spirit deeply yearning for a "controlled burn" in the Church by The Founder & Builder of the Church Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. This Lord Jesus is also His Temple "Cleanser". This inner ache intensifies when I ponder the horrendous mass of gospel-diluting & distracting cancerous barnacles on Her bow. These doctrinal fads take focus from the Person & the work of Christ-in Whom are hid all of the treasures of wisdom & knowledge [Col.2:19]. **The Apostle Paul**, despite how much special revelation & mysteries he was given by the Lord Himself, still had his sole resolve to be: "to know Jesus Christ & Him crucified" [I Cor.2:2]. In the light of this, when one ponders the American evangelical doctrinal landscape, how can one not desire such purgings? All it takes to see if one has lost his/her biblical, conservative perspective re: such issues is to read the preaching & sermons of the apostles in the book of Acts. What does one find? God-centered, Christ-exalting,

gospel-focused, calling-to-repentance messages-& nothing else. What a far cry this is from so much of American preaching. The text of Scripture, & the text alone, must be our bedrock, guide, & compass. If one wants to see what aspects of liberalism in its various forms has infected the Church, all one has to do is see where said liberalism has infected *the world*. The latter, sooner or later, *always* seeps into **The Church**.

'WHERE THERE IS SMOKE...'



Those lighted highway signs had a 2nd message they flashed: “Smoke May Be Visible”. Oh God. I pray there IS “smoke visible”! Smoke proves the existence of *fire*. The Church *must* have fire-the fire of zeal for her Lord but also the fire of cleansing. Lester Roloff, one of my favorite preachers, who ran schools for delinquent boys & girls in Texas for decades once said, “If your religion doesn’t have fire in it, God’s not in it”. He was commenting on the prophet Elijah’s famous declaration to the false prophets of Baal, “The God Who answers *by fire*-He is God!” [I Kgs. 18:24]. It only takes perusing thru the 2nd & 3rd chapters of Revelation to see how seriously the Lord Jesus takes the purity of His Church. O God, please come & conduct a fresh purgation of Your People!

“3 & OUT”



My brother-in-law years ago joked re: his favorite NFL team's former quarterback's incompetent playing, making a pun on his name, & adding at the end, "3 & out", meaning that he consistently failed to achieve first downs in games. This just came to mind as I pondered my next sobering article. I've preached re: the **Parable of the Sower** much in the past few months. I've often said this portion of God's Word is the key & most important part of Scripture. How so? Jesus said if you don't understand this parable you will not be able to understand any [Mk.4:13]. It has to do with hearing & understanding & appropriating the Word of God. If you are not able to do so, it won't matter what biblical subject is discussed-it will be of no avail to you. In all of these years of preaching re: The Sower [I'm a teaching- evangelist at heart-hence, in a very real way it is my key text re: understanding how & why the souls of men wind up in **Hell**] I had never done an in-depth study of the *context* of Jesus' delivering of this crucial parable. Prior to Him giving it, He was horrifically treated, slandered, rejected, & blasphemed by the sons of men. Hence, this explains the reason why He used parables to *hide* the truth from "those on the outside" [Mt.13:13]. Just prior to His delivery of the Sower, Jesus, after exorcising a demon from a man, setting this poor soul free from the horrors & torments of the **Evil One**, the scribes & Pharisees "said" {key word!}, "It is by the **Beelzebub** that He casts out demons!" [Mt.12:24]. Jesus then "called them to Himself". Ah! Fewer words are more precious to those of us who love Him than that! My heart swells for Him just by typing those words! But, O! Not this time! Jesus called them to Himself-to *condemn them-to consign them to Hell*-with no hope of forgiveness-ever! ☹ After giving them yet another parable re: **Satan**, He says, all blasphemies against God the Father [implied from context] & the Son of Man can be forgiven, but he who

speaks against the Holy Spirit *can never be forgiven-either in this age or the next* [Mt.12:31,32] “He said this because they *said*, ‘He has an evil spirit’” [Mk.3:30]. In the Greek those “last words” of His enemies are only **3**! By saying **3 words**, the Son of God Himself gave them HIS “last words” & consigned them to eternal perdition! O God-“**3 & out**”!

“INTRA-TRINITARIAN LOYALTY”



Did you notice Jesus’ words above, how, as always, they reflected the deepest recesses of His infinite heart? Did you notice His passionate zeal & jealousy for the 3rd Member of the Blessed Trinity? Did you notice that this is the only incident in the New Testament where divine forgiveness is explicitly related as impossible? Yes, I’m very aware rejecting Christ means no forgiveness of sin. “If you don’t believe that I AM He you will die in your sin” [Jn.8:24]. But here, in this incident, you graphically & soberly observe the Eternal incarnate **Son** standing up for & defending the dignity, honor, & divinity of the **Holy Spirit**. And, to demean Him by relegating Him & His glorious, gracious workings to the demonic means *instant spiritual death*-with no hope of restoration to the Divine favor procured by repentance. If this portion of the Word of God doesn’t teach, expound, & confirm the deity of the Spirit of God I don’t know what does. Note again Jesus said there was forgiveness for blaspheming **God the Father** [implied], & Himself-but *not* the Holy Spirit! Ah! Such love & loyalty among the Persons of the Trinity! Jesus was always zealous to safeguard His Father’s honor during His tenure upon this earth. The Father did the same with Him. And while the 1st & 2nd Persons of the Godhead seemingly have more of the “limelight” (?) shall we say, in the Holy Scriptures-They have no more divinity than does the Spirit. **Co-equal, co-eternal Persons in the One Being of God.**

“STUNNED AGAIN”



As I wrote in last month's newsletter, insights like these into God's Holy Word by His illuminating Spirit spawn the deepest awe & worship in my soul. It's breathtaking, really. I had written in that newsletter, quoting Luther's *A Mighty Fortress* hymn but appropriating it to my own situation, "One Little Word Shall Fell Him". Little did I know when I penned that last month that [Jonathan Edwards](#), of *Sinners In The Hands of an Angry God* sermon notoriety, in the 18th century had similar experiences. He wrote: "Sometimes only mentioning a single word caused my heart to burn within me, or only seeing the name of Christ, or the name of some attribute of God". [James R. White; [The Forgotten Trinity](#); c.1998; p.18]. O! May our Lord bring us into more times of adoration of Himself & His glorious perfections via His Word's Spirit-illuminated texts.

"HUMAN SMOKE-SCREENS"



Speaking of “smoke” above, once again, as He often did, the Lord Jesus cuts through characteristic human pretense & excuses for rejecting Him in the parable of the Sower. He said He spoke in parables to hide truth from those who didn’t want it. He said those whose hearts were hard like roads on which the seed of God’s Word were sown, could not see or understand spiritual things. Jesus declared the reason was not because they were intellectually deficient, but because they “hear heavily” [The Greek word for “heavy”, vis, “barus” being the root of our English word “barometer”]. They have also “utterly closed” [*Life of Christ In Stereo* translation] their eyes, so that they would *not* see nor understand-otherwise, they would have to turn & repent & change their ways, etc. [Mt.13:15]. The apostle Paul indicts the unbelieving Jews of his generation with the same text [Acts 27:28] from the prophet Isaiah [Isa.6:9,10]. This comports with what our Lord Jesus said was ultimately the bottom-line motive with every single person who rejects Him & His gospel, contrary to whatever “smokescreen excuse” they give for doing so-they love their sin [Jn.3:19]. Paul says basically the same thing when he indicts the whole human race for unbelief-all who can observe nature know there is a God, that He is powerful, eternal, & has qualities unlike ours [Rom.1:19,20]. Paul declares knowing God is a given, but in his fallen nature’s hostility toward God, man suppresses this truth [Rom.1:18].

“A ‘CATHOLIC’ TRUTH”



The key to the above could perhaps be best summed up from a quote I discovered at Christmastime in 2018. I had purchased online a number of vintage religious films produced mostly by the Lutheran Church but also some by Roman Catholic filmmakers. “A Star Shall Rise”, a *Family Theater* film, produced by Father Patrick Peyton in 1952, had somewhat of a profound quote cited at the beginning of the picture. It read, “**Some men find truth through science and learning...**” [via

general, natural revelation-see Rom.1:19, 20 referred to above; all truth is God's truth; when I was a baby Christian a friend from a church I was visiting at the time told me, "You can see *God* in creation-but not *Calvary*". The latter requires special revelation.] "...**Some through simple faith...**", [but] "**None without humility**". This last phrase immediately reminded me of our Blessed Lord's heart-dissecting words, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins & become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven" [Mt.18:3, NLT]. Once again, as always, Jesus the Christ, the Watcher of Men [Job 7:20], knows what is in men [Jn.2:24,25] & exposes their prideful self-deceived non-sense & excuses. He cuts to the quick, & calls them to humility & repentance. End of discussion.

"HE HAS MERCY ON WHOM HE WILL"



One last "fear & awe of God" insight that surrounds the context of the parable of the Sower. Prior to our Lord delivering that parable, He had denounced the cities He had performed the most miracles in-because they didn't repent. God's Christ said re: His hometown Capernaum [He was kicked out of His hometown Nazareth!] that it would be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment for **Sodom** than for it. How so? The Lord in His omniscience & foreknowledge knew that IF the same miracles He had performed in Capernaum *had been* performed in Sodom, Sodom would still have existed in His day & not have been "reduced to ashes" [II Pet.2:6]. And yet, & yet-despite the Lord knowing this, He still chose NOT to perform the miracles in Sodom! Thoughts like this can put one on his face-& rightly so! He has mercy on whom He chooses to have mercy [Rom.9:15]. The awe of the Lord is in the text, if we will but only dig. When you "hit the text", the Spirit's wells gush forth! May He help us. Amen.



***Caboose! Commentary Corner:** [Our daughter Laura once said she'd love to have my old Bibles when I passed for all of the notes I have written in them over the decades. This was quite humbling to say the least, especially coming from one of your own children. Hence, I've decided to post each month random notes/comments from Bibles I have studied from: "Our preaching of the gospel to the lost must be of such a nature that it either provides deliverance [from sin, guilt, wrath]-or evidence [for their judgment on the Day of Judgment]". [MRG 2/20/2020]. "The scribes sent themselves to Hell by just saying 3 words [in Greek]: 'He has an unclean spirit.'" [ibid].



Caboose! On the Loose:

***Lookin' out for the little guys...**

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

Feb. 23: New Life Church, Egg Harbor Township, NJ: Sun. a.m. service

March 3: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//network pastors' mtg.

March 7: Converge Church, Moorestown, NJ: children's workers' workshop

March 9: Sonrise Tax Service, Lebanon, PA: annual Christian taxman trip!

March 15 a.m.: Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church, Colora, MD: Sun. a.m. service: drama & sermon

March 15 p.m.: Via Dolorosa preliminary setup for "Pilate" & his Via sectors begins.

March 29: Cornerstone Christian Church, Broomall, PA: 2 Sun. a.m. services

March 22-31: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: General Via Dolorosa Setup



***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 [any amount no matter how small is greatly appreciated!], 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. Any gift no matter how small would be greatly appreciated! Thank you! [click here](#)**

Michael Robert "Guerty" Guertin

3 Windsor Road

Wilmington, DE 19809-2144

(302) 764-0490

www.cabooseministries.org

www.hopewellsummercamps.org

Facebook: Michael Robert Guertin

Ministry Facebook: Michael Guerty Guertin

YouTube Channel: Michael Robert Guertin