

November 1, 2010

“ACTOR, PREACHER, WORSHIP LEADER, BABYSITTER: ALL IN ONE DAY!”

Dear Friends & Family,

(10/3) The **October** newsletter just went out last week, but today was “one of those Sundays” I just had to write about. I awoke a little after 4 a.m. this morning. I had to leave the house by 8 a.m. for Reading, PA to perform a Time Machine drama there, a.k.a., “**Cain**”, then preach, which I did. It was a “hard” message, re: Cain’s deliberate rejection of Adam & Eve’s godly counsel so evidenced in his irreverent & harsh treatment of the merciful entreaties of the Lord. I felt to warn these precious inner-city people & myself via the bad example of Cain, to guard our hearts from going through the spiritual motions, when our hearts are “far away” somewhere else (Isa.29:13). I also exhorted them to realize that the gospel is so very powerful, & precious, & divine that one cannot remain “neutral” when he or she hears it. Their heart either softens or hardens each time they do. The host got up when I finished & said he didn’t know how to end the meeting. The pastor I served under during my last children’s pastorate years ago said the very same thing about me, “Michael doesn’t know how to end a meeting”. He was right. When you long, ache, pray, & prepare for God to come in a powerful, manifest way through the Spirit’s moving upon the written word, who *would* want the meeting to end?! After the meeting, I had an impromptu meeting with a former kids’ ministry colleague from years ago. When that was finished, I packed & loaded up the truck & headed for another meeting with a dear little brother/friend where the main topics of conversation were “grace & children’s ministry”. I had to shorten my time with him in order to rush home, unload my truck, grab my guitar, then head immediately to our own church where I led worship for our own church’s youth group. After worship, I packed up my guitar & accessories & then headed up to the top floor for “grandfatherly” duties. One of our granddaughters is enrolled in our church’s Sunday night children’s program. However, because of her young age, a chaperone is required for her attendance. Kim was in VA helping her parents out, so guess who got the privilege? J “Fortunately” for me, she was so tired that she wanted to go to the nursery this evening instead. Hence, it was a *very full* but blessed Lord’s Day, which, by the way also included over 150 miles of driving too.

(10/19) “HAVING A ‘BRAVE-ENOUGH HEART’ TO THROW OUT ‘BRAVEHEART’”

I recently did an indoor workout due to a flat tire on my mountain bike. In the past, I would watch my favorite Bible movies while doing so. This time, I decided to view Mel Gibson’s Oscar-winning film, “Braveheart”. This might surprise some of you, but I have never seen the entire movie, even though I have portrayed him on horseback in camp dramas & also in a pre-sermon chapel drama for one of my assistant directors who preached following it. I was deeply grieved & stunned to see “what it showed” re: Mel Gibson & his wife re: their “honeymoon”. I quickly fast-forwarded it & couldn’t believe nor understand why they would be so graphic, when in their courtship in the movie it was so innocent & childlike. As is so often the case, their “love” scene, even though by husband & wife, was so unnecessary. Once again, as the noted Bible

teacher Bob Mumford said at an Elim conference many years ago, “The camera (either TV or movie) takes you places where you would never go in real life”. After the tyrannical English overlords gruesomely murdered his wife, Gibson, a.k.a., “William Wallace”, rides into the village & wreaks a violent revenge on them. My “flesh” loved this. I love seeing ‘the bad guys’ ‘get it’, whether it’s western, or an army movie, or a European history movie like Braveheart. I wanted to rewind it & watch this scene again. However, deep inside of me there was a convincingly clear “Holy Spirit check”. His thoughts & heart flooded mine. “Michael, do you really want to watch that scene again?” He seemed to interject. It will only teach, encourage, & reinforce the principle of “returning evil for evil”, & “an eye for an eye”. Then, when the time comes when evil comes *my way*, these graphic visual images will have had “their say” in my heart & mind & will have had the potential to override Jesus’ clear teachings not to resist evil. This is what violent video games do as well to the young & not so young. They feed & reinforce the flesh to conquer, crush, & annihilate the wicked. Yet, the Scriptures are clear, “Vengeance is Mine, says the Lord. I will repay”. I felt the zeal to not only stop watching the movie, but to throw it out. I would dare guess that the majority of Christians in the U.S. have watched & admired & been inspired by this movie. I remember attending a youth conference years ago where I heard that at one of the meetings the leaders painted their faces blue like Gibson & brought large swords to the conference. Again, for the camp drama years ago I painted my face blue & road horseback into the fray. A number of “Time Machine” dramas I have performed over the many years have been inspired by movies I have watched. Yet, one cannot be immersed in the Scriptures for any considerable period of time & not become more sensitive to such issues. Yes, I know—many Christians would disagree with me, re: throwing it out. I won’t miss it.

“CRUISE CONTROL: AND THE LACK THEREOF”

Kim & I returned yesterday from FL where we had been the past eight days. Those days also included a cruise to *the Bahamas*, accompanied by my five siblings & most of their spouses, courtesy of my father, in honor of my mother who passed a year ago on dad’s 84th birthday. He wanted to honor mom & do “one last thing together” before he passes. He is 85 now & has had Parkinson’s Disease for many years, along with several other physical maladies. This may surprise some of you, but I had absolutely no desire to go; none whatsoever. Yes, I did want to honor my dad’s last request &, as always, be with him & my siblings & their spouses. I would have been content just to spend several days at his house with everyone. So, we went. Temptation was everywhere for me. I knew it would be. The sights, the sounds, the atmosphere—it was all there. I purposed by God’s grace to make this cruise a “missions trip”. On the first night, I went outside to the bow. It was so dark. The ocean was so big, deep, & ominous. This huge steel ship of such massive tonnage, was only the point of a pin on the vast ocean. I was afraid—very afraid. I looked up at the star-studded sky & told the Lord, “I know I’m 54, but I’m just a little boy inside”. I was afraid for the crew & cruisers. Why? This wasn’t the “Good Ship Hope” embarking on missions trip. It was a cruise ship, basically existing for self-indulgence & pleasure-seeking! I asked the Lord for mercy for myself & the rest of the passengers. I asked Him to help me glorify Him & share Jesus with others while on board. In the casino,

I would “clandestinely” walk through it, placing gospel tracts on the one-arm-bandits & other gambling machines.

I knew there were overhead security cameras watching everything. I got a bit scared near the end, wondering if the casino staff monitoring the cameras noticed this strange guy doing so, & what they’d do if so!

"WAITING ON THE WAITERS"

The best part of the cruise to me had to be the cruise staff. They work non-stop, day & night, without a day off, for several months. I marveled how any of them, without the Lord in their life, could do so & “stay sweet”. I work with the public. I know how the public can be! One of them shared with us his wife’s inability to conceive. I gathered Kim & some of my sisters together & we prayed for him right there in the dining hall. He told Kim that in eight years of serving on the ship, no one had ever prayed for him before. He had just always been treated as “a waiter”. I wept when I related that to someone else. I was also able to pray for our headwaiter on another night. I tried to encourage & hug the waiters any chance I could. I told one of them before I left the dining hall that Jesus had walked on water, raised the dead, healed the sick, etc., & yet, after having had dined with His apostles, HE got up & washed their feet & “waited” on them! I pray these seeds will find fertile soil & that our God will send more of His servants on future cruises to water them. May it be so. Thank you for reading this, & for whatever help the Lord might prompt you to provide in our work for Him.

Michael and Kim