

October 1, 2008

“A WORD TO THE WISE SUFFICIENT?”

Dear Friends & Family,

(9/23) I've been trying to seek the Lord for wisdom, re: "wisdom". That is, I'm trying to "understand understanding" (the name of my senior thesis at Elim, by the way), in order to convey it to a group of teenagers at our church at the end of the month. I have taught for years that basically, wisdom is "knowing the difference between good & evil". Of course, there is much more involved than that. Trying to grasp it for myself & convey it to the young is no easy task. In doing so, I had the weight of a small battleship, no, make that a large battleship, come upon me, as I mused over the value that Solomon, in the early chapters of Proverbs, lays upon wisdom. "...if you seek her (i.e., "Wisdom") as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures..."(Pr.2:4). The thought came, how would we react, if we were to learn that someone had hidden a winning lottery ticket inside of our house, or, a safe-deposit box containing a vast fortune hidden somewhere in your house by the now-deceased previous owner, who intentionally left it there for new owners/occupants? I can't help but believe our hearts would swell up with disbelief, excitement, & energy to locate these valuables at all cost. Phones would not be answered nor text-messaged, televisions would be either ignored or turned off, i-pods put down, shopping considered unimportant, all the doors of the house locked, & the window shades drawn, etc. I'm sure every member of the family, if they weren't scurrying & scouring the premises to do so, would be forced to do so by their parents! Emotions would run high & exude levels of intensity unseen or heard of, perhaps for several months, or maybe even years! Beloved, when was the last time you & I viewed God's Word as such? Have we ever viewed God's Word as such? Solomon goes on to say, re: finding wisdom, that "...its profit is better than the profit of silver, and its gain than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and *nothing* you desire compares with her" (Pr.3:14,15, emphasis mine). **“GOOD AS GOLD?”**

AM talk radio shows' commercials are all of the time exalting gold as a "sure-bet" investment. Hmmm.... Job said he treasured the words of God's mouth more than his necessary food (Job 23:12). Have you begun to feel the weight of that battleship I mentioned above? I have. It is very, very, heavy. Oh, the mercy the Lord has upon us. We are soooooo far from Him, that is, from where He longs for us to be! God's Word lies there on our coffee tables, thriving with life. If you put your heart's ear up to it, you can hear it beating. If you had a "spiritual" Geiger Counter, it would be giving off a strong signal. It has, as it were, "holy Radon": unseen, unheard, unscented, etc., & yet radiating influencing rays. Say what you will about me, but I was so very grieved a few years back, when the Harry Potter craze was all about. Why? Because children (an age group I frequently work with) would line up for hours to buy the book; they would dress like Hogwarts, wizards, & witches, emulating their Potter heroes. They would (& do) spend countless hours gorging on books that are absolutely worthless, but these same children cannot quote a Bible verse! If that is not idolatry on the part of the young I don't know what is! All I could think of was Jesus, *The Lover of the Children*, standing there saddened & grieved, that these little precious lost sheep knew nothing of Him & His glorious invaluable Word. It's the same with teenagers & us adults, Beloved. We can quote our favorite songs' lyrics, singing them deeply from a heart filled with emotion, rant off our favorite sports' teams' statistics, etc., but we're so "low-intensity" concerning God's Word. Have you ever watched someone watch TV, or a movie, or a video game? Their eyes & ears, their attention, their total undistracted focus, etc., is fixed, riveted, & mesmerized on that screen, completely oblivious to everyone & everything around them. Now, when was the last time you saw someone in the Word that way? I'm a *preacher* & I'm guilty! Oh, may our gracious Father have mercy. I'm still convinced the deepest regret for most if not all Christians on That Great Day will be His words, filled with *treasures beyond description*,

were too often neglected by us all while here on earth. That is one of Billy Graham's regrets even now as he approaches eternity's doors. May we learn wisdom from this seasoned saint of God. We do well to heed the Queen of Sheba's example: she exuded wisdom, by *seeking* Solomon's wisdom (I Kgs. 10; II Chr. 9). May our Father, by His grace, lift the battleship-weight of "ought to", "should have", concerning His Word, off of our too-off' Bible neglecting hearts! **"DOCTRINE DIVIDES, JESUS UNITES?"**

In our continuing "series" re: Christian myths, this is a big one. It has been cited for decades, no, really, for centuries, since The Church's inception at Pentecost re: the perceived debilitating affect that doctrine has had on the unity of The Church. On the contrary, sound doctrine has kept The Church. That is what doctrine is *supposed* to do. It is intended to divide! It divides God's people from those who are not His people. It demarcates. It draws the line between doctrines & teachings that glorify God & His exalt His Son & His Son's redemptive work & those that do not. No one would be in Heaven were it not for sound doctrine. In fact, doctrine *must* divide, if it is to serve one of its major purposes designed by the Lord of the Church. This division provides *protection*, from the many false teachers & "wolves" that seek to tear & divide the flock of God (Acts 20:29). All cults & errant "church" groups are so because of *unsound* doctrine! The gospel itself is a doctrine. Doctrine is a *detector* of false doctrine. It is the standard by which we determine so. Much of the division within the Body of Christ has come from those who have not promulgated sound doctrine. Doctrine actually *unites* when it is true, sound, biblical doctrine. It unites those whose hearts are right with God; it exposes & corrects those whose hearts are not. If correction from sound doctrine is not received, it separates them. "You must have divisions within you (almost always over doctrine), so that that which is approved of God might be made manifest" (I Cor. 11:19).

The above being said, it is much more often the pride of men that separates; the incorrigibility of men; the evil motives of men (eg. "to draw away disciples after themselves", Acts 20:30). Inevitably, on this side of Heaven, because we *are* men, there will be disagreement. As long as the doctrinal issues are "peripheral", that is, non-essential, that is, not dealing with the character & glory of God & His Word, His Son Jesus' unfathomable sacrifice on the cross, etc. nor the impugning thereof, they need not divide. Better cited, this oft-repeated quip should perhaps say, "Jesus' doctrine unites & divides; Satan & men's doctrines unite & divide", depending on its adherents!

As always, Kim & I are so very grateful for all of your support. Given the economy, any gift, no matter how small, is greatly appreciated.

Love in Jesus,

Michael

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[Please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, 1703 Dalton Rd, Lima, NY 14485. Thanks!]

[Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant home missionary, endorsed by his local church. He supports his family & his ministry by faith in the Lord & His provision through His people.]

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

Oct. 3: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: "Warehouse" Youth Group Lock-In

Oct. 6: Eden Resort Inn, Lancaster, PA: Elim Fellowship Annual Regional Mid-Atlantic Conference

Oct. 7: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Elverson, PA: camp board mtg.//HN pastors' mtg.

Oct. 10-12: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: annual men's retreat, Cape Henlopen, DE

Oct. 24-26: Tel Hai Camp, Honey Brook, PA: Petra Christian Fellowship Jr. Youth retreat

Oct. 16,23,24: Michael's birthday, Michael & Kim's anniversary, Kim's birthday (respectively)

Oct. 30: Immanuel Church, Wilmington, DE: Kids' Kandy Carnival

Oct. 31: Halloween tract-handing out at home