

October 2008—Anticipation

I'm writing from Alaska, sitting on the bank of the Teklanika River on the north of side of Denali. After a week of revival meetings in two different churches and a few days of R & R with Terri, I headed out, traveling 40 miles upstream in boats specially equipped to handle the river. I am on a 10-day hunt with CBM Missionaries "Gnarly Dan" Jeffery and "Johnny the Kid" Dillon. Our fourth man on the hunt is Howard, a retired Alaska Fish and Game Biologist. (Poor Terri is sunning herself in Florida at a ladies' retreat instead of bundled up with me in the cold rain. Some people just don't know a good opportunity when they see one.)

This entire trip also has had a spiritual emphasis—with numerous opportunities to pray together and have quality personal time with the Lord. Each day we study the Bible around the camp fire. We are enjoying the precious fellowship and prayer as we glorify our Lord in this beautiful chunk of His Creation.

Yesterday after a morning hunt, Jon and I rendezvoused on the gravel bank of the river to compare notes and plan our next move. As we talked in whispered tones, our perspective shifted from moose to ministry. We are here to hunt moose—and this goal is impacting all of our activities: where we go, how we walk, and how we talk. In all we do, we are consciously aware that we could see a moose at any moment. This anticipation and hope even influences us when we cook and go to the river to wash our dishes; it would be foolhardy to walk to the river to wash a pot without taking our rifle. We want to be ready!

I commented to Jon that the need in my life is to have the same moment-by-moment sensitivity and preparedness to the possibility of the Lord's return—*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2.11-13).

Dear Missionaries, I realize your reference point is different than mine (you're probably not sitting in the woods!), yet may I challenge you in your walk, talk, activities and priorities? Are you living each day in the realization of the truth of God's word—that we expect our dear Lord to return at any time?

Bill

Post Script: *Now that I am back "outside" (as the Alaskans call the lower 48), safe from the moose, the bears, and Gnarly Dan, I can report the moose are safe in their habitat. Am I disappointed? Certainly there is some disappointment, but at the end of the day, whether we are talking about getting a moose or the return of the Lord, I've had a good day. Was it wasted effort? Absolutely not! You see, Paul knew that sensitivity and anticipation (whether hunting or waiting for Him) is in itself rewarding! If I hunt diligently and return empty handed,*

I've still experienced beauty and practiced discipline; if I live expectantly and the Lord does not return, I've still become more like Christ in the meantime.

The hunt is over but the lessons learned have already contributed to sharpening my spiritual focus. By His grace, I want to live each day expecting His return.