THOUGHTS OF MARCH, 2015

First, some thoughts on our life together; “together” meaning our good fortune of being a particular and functional part of the body of Christ, although we are scattered geographically in America, Scotland, the Philippines, New Zealand, India, Bahrain, Mexico, Uruguay, Antarctica and several South Pacific Islands. We are important to one another, although many of us have not met. We relate to, feed and tolerate one another, often without knowing it. We have a life style of “loving one another,” which fulfills the law of Christ – Gal. 6:2; Jam. 2:8. We are community [a commonness of soul that promotes functional unity].

Christ’s community promotes the realization of potential [success]. It is His body; it [He and we] sustain and transform one another partly because we are a community of wounded warriors, which started with King Jesus, our Head. We know how to encourage one another to pursue joy and extend love – Heb. 10:25. The better we get at those attributes, the more effective we are at admonishing one another to not accept lesser substitutes – Heb. 3:13. We are an imperfect group, but are not afraid to pursue perfection. We have been transformed by an unending [Ps. 137], unconditional [1 John 4:19], undeserved [Rom. 5:8] love. His love creates a confidence in us [1 John 3:21] to live in such a way that with Jesus we bring God’s kingdom onto earth as it is in heaven.

As long as humility reigns over pride, we remain very much unlike the society around us. Christ’s reality among people is a powerful force. It changes that which is contrary. When we lose that force, no longer being a safe place for other wounded ones, some of us turn to other attractions, joining the world which has no answers.

People are leaving the church and looking for community. Hence, a good reason why Facebook boasts 1.23 billion monthly active users. Many do not even consider the church because they have never perceived it to be a community. Christ alive in and reigning over His wounded community is a tremendous force that has the power to draw the world to Him and to change their lives – John 12:32.

1. Seven pearls of wisdom not [all] found in Scripture: 1) Let’s first settle the question of which translation/paraphrase of the Bible is best. Answer: The one that we will read. 2) We are unlikely to become godly by wanting to become godly. If we have set our hearts on becoming godly, we should not be so general; uncomplicate our lives by focusing on one godly characteristic at a time. For that, watch where in our soul the Holy Spirit is currently working, or at least is wanting to work. His working may be at the point of our most constant failure, or at one of occasional failure but which unduly grieves us or others. Galatians chapter 5 will help. If that doesn’t work, consult with a friend. If that also doesn’t work, ask an enemy; that will work. 3) No form of force can change an enemy into a friend, except the force of love. 4) Risk-taking is a part of life, in or out of the kingdom. The Lord wants us to take risks in order to be true to Him, but not to enhance our own prestige. For example, Jesus rejected the temptation to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to be spectacularly saved from harm and to jump-start His ministry. 5) Our project is to be in this world without becoming part of it. 6) The church has often been compared to a ship whose sails have been set to catch the winds from heaven. If there is a Wind, revival occurs if the sails have been rightly set. Good sailors know to re-set their sails if the ship is going nowhere in a wind. 7) The least blessed among us are those who have plenty – Matt. 5:6.

2. Question: Are you a believer in Christ, or are you a follower of Christ in whom you believe? Yes, being a believer can be the same as being a follower, and that seems to be the way Scripture usually uses the terms, but the two labels are not always synonyms. Answer for yourself from John 8:31-33, John 14:23-24 and 1 John 2:3-6.

3. A statistic from D. U., a long ago co-worker, now missionary to the world: “When there were only 1 billion people in the world, our [denomination – ed.] had 758 missionaries in India alone. In this decade, with the population of India alone far above 1 billion, I was our only missionary there. My brothers and sisters, we must reverse that trend. It has never been easier for us to share the gospel.”

4. The largest, and at that time apparently the only, city in the world will be New Jerusalem – Rev. 21:16. It will be a square city, 1,500 miles in each direction. The surface of the world will have been obliterated, as it apparently had been and was recorded in Genesis 1:2. There will be no utilities such as electricity, gas, water, sewage, garbage pickup, cable TV, etc. because our miraculous bodies will need none of that. I suppose that New Jerusalem will have no hallways, as also the streets will not be for cars or carriages and possibly not even for walking, because we will move from place to place through walls and anything else by thought and by the speed of thought – as did Jesus here on earth after He had received His post-resurrection, miraculous body. There will be no banks, no grocery stores, no medical clinics or hospitals, no gasoline stations, no restaurants, no shops, and no movies/cinemas. We will be prepared for all of that currently-unimaginable, truly heavenly lifestyle by having been through our present earthlife and 1,000 years of “intermediate living” called the millennium. All things are processing; all is process. Be busy, be eager, be patient.

5. There are many in this world who worship or commit to someone or something that they do not know much or anything about. Indeed, we know nothing as we could [1 Cor. 8:2], not even the Lord as we should. Humanity was created with an emptiness and yearning that says, “There is a God. I need Him.” Such was the condition of the “poor, ignorant” woman at the well in John 4:22. She worshiped what she did not know, although the One to be worshiped was near at hand – coming and going in the temple in Jerusalem, and at that moment in her presence.

Then there were those “wise and intelligent” in Athens [Greece] who studied all things religious, being careful to not omit or offend any god – Acts 17:22-23. Like the Samaritan woman, they too were worshiping gods they knew little or nothing about.

Some who worship ignorantly are genuine seekers of the true God, and have then found Him. But some of those seekers narrowed their search down to a monotheistic god and stopped. That is close, but deception uses “close” to convince us that our search is over, that we have found the answer our hearts have yearned for. Yet, the deceiver is a liar; there is not even a bit of truth in him. He fathers lies, extreme and religious obligations, and binding imperatives. The further we follow that trail, the more impossible life becomes. Our soul rebels. While yet worshiping the lie we hold death to our bosom.

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life – the revelation of that God who unbinds us, fills our emptiness and lets us know Him.

6. Have you found it rather easy to be patient with sinners? How about sinners who are proud of being sinners? Pride is an impediment to the free flow of grace, even to the grace of simple human friendship and patience.

7. We yearn for spiritual revival as if its route comes only from above, totally from outside the church. Others see revival as coming from the church through programs, with blessings from the Lord. Truly, spiritual revival does come only from the Holy Spirit, but not entirely apart from humanity. Revival is a new beginning of obedience to the Lord. We certainly yearn for Him to become obvious by His presence and by powerful biblical spiritualities, but He may start by calling us to obedience to that which He has already said and written. Conviction of our sins of neglect and disobedience is a major work of the Holy Spirit – John 16:13-14.

8. I can remember when I did all of the following, and hope to not repeat any of them. Basically, salvation is not best defined as being saved from hell, but as being saved from sin. Escaping hell comes along with our salvation but is not the prime or most praiseworthy project at hand as we go through this life.

My memory of how I thought about religion in my juvenile years was perked recently. In those years I and my church peers would wonder how much we could get away with and still make it into heaven. [Lots of wrong theology in that.] I had no desire to be delivered from carnality but I did want to escape the fires of hell. At that time, carnality was fun, even worth the chances of getting singed just a bit.

Updating and adapting that theology to others today, I have no great difficulty loving and showing my love to habitual, bound-in-sin sinners [whether Christians or not], but presenting some with the truth of Jesus’ call to righteousness is another thing, especially if our relationship is fragile and they are embedded in their sin. As often said, I once walked in their shoes. I can understand their love of self and sin, their bondage to their “freedoms,” their helplessness in their happiness -- and my at times weak, careful way of loving them. I say “weak and careful way” because I and the church have designed our love to be so “loving and non-condemning” that they may not even know that their sin is sin, is known to others, that it is an affront to their righteous God, and perhaps to the church. It is as if we should exercise no judgment regarding sin and certainly not speak with them of it. Offending them and losing their fellowship would be more terrible than their in-depth bondages.

The church seems to be stymied by the command to love the sinner and hate the sin. We either love the sinner and soft-peddle their sin, or hate [ignore, separate from, condemn] the sinner while coming down hard on them in their sin -- especially if their sin shows or if they flaunt it. Recalling the grasp of my sins on me softens my heart toward even the worst reprobate, but should not make me tolerant of their or my sin.

The Lord Jesus was soft hearted toward sinners, leading many to forsake their sins. But He was not soft on sin. Also, He bore down on those who held to their sins. He was patient with sinners, but not soft on sin. In fact, His perfect love face-to-face with sinners was often instrumental in their turning from sin.

Our assignment is to be clearly hard on sin and obviously soft toward bound, habitual sinners. That presents me [by and with God’s grace, thank the Lord!] with the responsibility to shape up. As long as I am unbalanced regarding habitual sinners and their sin, I’m not where I should be, yet.

9. The Lord commonly speaks on our level in Scripture, meaning not only to our level of understanding [of course] but at times to make Himself sound simply human in His thinking and nature, sometimes almost ridiculously human. For example, sometimes He “repents” as in Genesis 6:6-7, Deuteronomy 32:36 and Psalm 106:45. Then He “remembered” Noah after the flood in Genesis 8:1 and “took note of Sarah” in Genesis 21:1 as if God Almighty had afterthoughts, as we humans do.

And, praise God!!, there are many more “humanoid-type” examples of His nature in Scripture, all for the purpose of presenting and explaining Himself to us on our level of understanding and feeling. No need for divine revelation to understand those many easier ones. Most of those many are the ways He cancels His own word, His own demands for specific-sinner justice when, for the sake of a repentant one, He cancels His judgment, and forgives.

Thank you, Jesus. I understand that.

10. There were several responses to February ’s Thought No. 9 on the difference between a trial and a temptation. Add this to it: Trials and temptations are not meant to make us sin, but to enable us to conquer sin. They are meant to make us good, not bad. They are meant to strengthen us, not weaken us.

11. Have you wondered how Jesus knew it was time for Him to leave home and get about His calling, of which He had become increasingly aware over His years on earth? This reason is the best that I have heard: Scripture said that Elijah would come before the Messiah. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, meaning that John had the message and anointing of Elijah. John was Elijah according to the “first reference” of that prophecy from Malachi 4:5, with the “fullest reference” expected to be Elijah with Moses in the Revelation 11:1-12. Jesus knew His cousin, John the Baptist, and was spiritually perceptive of John’s ministry and message, so when John began His ministry Jesus knew His time had come.

Any better idea, understanding, or revelation?

12. The Law was given to Israel through Moses. That was 2,000 years after creation, as we are given to understand creation via Scripture. During those years, say the Rabbis, there were six other things created: repentance [the way out of sin, condemnation, and punishment], paradise [the holding place of the deceased righteous until Jesus preached the gospel there], hell [the holding place of the unrighteous, perhaps also until Jesus preached the gospel there] , the throne of God [I don’t know why they thought His throne had not been created before temporal creation was begun], the celestial temple [ditto] and the name of the Messiah [supposing that there was no need for the Messiah-Redeemer and a name for Him until Adam needed one for Him].

13. In Jesus’ day the chief priests [Matt. 2:4] were made up of two groups of priests: the current high priest, ex-high priests, and the other priests of their immediate families. Theirs was a priestly aristocracy that excluded the many other priests. Then there were the scribes, who were not priests but experts in Scripture and the Law. Just as it is the nature of [all forms of] civil government to gather power and exclusiveness to itself, so it is in religious government.

14. The eastern way of thinking about engagement and marriage is not too far from our western ways, except for timing and depth of commitment involved. In Scripture, the couple was first engaged. This may have been accomplished when they were children, and most likely by others than themselves. They may have never seen each other until their marriage. Marriage was far too serious to be left to the couple.

Then there was the betrothal. At this point the girl could break the engagement if she was unwilling to proceed. Otherwise the engagement was ratified and absolutely binding. In biblical days the betrothal lasted a year, during which the couple were known as husband and wife, although they had none of the rights thereof. If it was to be terminated, divorce was necessary. Mary and Joseph faced this when she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

Thirdly came the marriage proper. They surely did ease into and prepare well for marriage, didn’t they!

15. Matthew 1:1-17 is the genealogy of Jesus and is [per verse 17] broken down into three sections. Each section reveals that the lives of the Lord’s people were divided into three sections-processes by the One who “rules over the realm of mankind” – Dan. 4:25. Those sections-processes are:

 1) From Abraham to David, 14 generations, as God’s chosen people grew from a single man [and him as good as dead] into a world power. Being created in God’s image, destined for greatness, power and authority, we can be fulfilled only in God’s way. Man always fails when he pursues his own ways. Even our apparently great accomplishments are nothing – John 5:19, 30; 15:5.

 2) From David to the deportation to Babylon, 14 generations, the story of failure, shame and disaster. Given freedom and power, man indeed fails. Part of that freedom is to defy God and to use His gifts to rule in the flesh. Man cannot make himself what he wants to be when he is working in opposition to God’s plans, blindly or intentionally.

 3) From the deportation in Babylon to the Messiah, 14 generations, the coming of the world’s Redeemer from slavery. Here is shown that God will not be thwarted in His plans for man. He has shown us the results of being left to our own devices, yet He did not destroy us, did not allow others to destroy us, and did not allow us to destroy ourselves. He sent His Son [unimaginable!!!] into this self-made mess, snatched us from the fire, broke our chains, and offered us life and fellowship and victory within Him.

16. Be careful with my, your and others’ theologies. Theology is man’s study of God. It’s not a bad thing but it’s a type of philosophy and is created by man. It should be easy to look at that definition and see that it must be imperfect, at its best. Moreover, so much of one’s theology is considered “the gospel.” With that approach to our understanding of Scripture we have a ready bias when we read the Real Gospel. When we read our bias into the Real Gospel we are in dangerous territory, as shown by theological labels such as “biblical.” Biblical biases result in approaches to difficult or contrary scriptures which cause us to ignore or misinterpret those scriptures. When we do that, we have been provided a clue that our theologies have led us to the gate of heresy.

17. Our emotions are influenced strongly by our memories – by the way we integrated events into our souls while we were kids. Suppressed memories are as potent as are the well-remembered ones. Our well-remembered ones give us conscious joy or pain, while the suppressed ones are less obviously “productive,” “influential,” or “controlling.” The remembered ones prompt us to express gratitude or resentment, but the suppressed ones [being necessarily about times of grief] give us neither expressions of gratitude nor permit us to repent, forgive, and heal.

What does the Lord do about our blind spots that continue to cause surprising bursts of unrighteousness? He is the shepherd of our souls, is He not?! He has a/the responsibility for us, does He not?! Are the redeemed doomed to go into the hereafter with souls that were blighted from our youth? God forbid! Part of the cleansing process for our souls occurs within “the Family.” As the redeemed get closer to one another, relax our barriers, and learn to give to and receive from our Family the soul cleansing begins. We are washed from remorse, guilt and unforgiveness. In fact, we begin to see how those varied old events have their place in God’s plan for us. The Redeemer is at work among His redeemed Family.

18. A crisis is merely when Jesus Christ the Lord is judging. The Greek word in this case means to separate, to winnow, therefore to distinguish and discriminate, therefore to judge in that manner. Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into the world” – John 9:39. And again, “Now is the judgment of this world” – John 12:31. Crises take many forms, have varying intensities, and are always going on, both personally and worldwide.

NOTE: When Jesus said He did not come to judge, He meant He did not come to issue the judicial type of judgments that later He will issue at His judgment seat for the meting out of justice.

The Holy Spirit is working to integrate the entire world under the headship of God, like He is working in the church to integrate it into living and functioning as a body should. When each part of the world recognizes its function, decides to fulfill its role, sees that it can rely upon the other parts to fulfill their commitments, and yields to established headship the world is always better off, plus the kingdom within is blessed. For example see God’s preparation of Cyrus king of Persia for freeing captive Israel to return to their land and rebuild their nation. And conversely, the better that the church is functional materially, morally, and spiritually – the better off is the world around us. The Lord ordains the church to make the world better off [and give it peace] and He ordains the world to make the church better off [and give it peace]. See Romans 13:3-6 [1-7].

That one Thought can stir us to think that things certainly can be improved in both ways. Things have been better at times in the smaller past, but are progressively more disintegrated the further abroad the body’s, a business’s, a nation’s functions are extended. We get too big to be humanly coordinated – to be one organism by means of any presently known and possessed means. Some supernatural process or person is needed. That brings up two solutions – the coming, unrighteous, worldwide leader [antichrist] and the coming, righteous, worldwide leader [Messiah Jesus]. Both will propose integration but only the Messiah can and will accomplish it. In the meantime, notice the freedom, patience, quietness, peace, longsuffering and endurance associated with our having chosen to go with Jesus. Peter [2 Peter 3:8-9, 14-15] noticed his own development of those graces also.

It does not take a student of history to notice that there have been both small and massive moves toward world integration. A few of the larger ones, and only in the Near East at that, have been the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, Romans and Islam. Amid all of that transience of governments, politics and cultures there have been only three things that have shown to be of promise, but ultimately failed – force [which unites only where and as long as the force is present and used adequately], commerce [which unites and is understood in every land, tribe and culture], and religion [the need for which is built into the soul of every human]. But even those three unifying forces, as so far employed for empire integration, will eventually and finally be found lacking – Rev. 17 & 18. At that end there will be only one Integrating Factor still standing, the Man Jesus. He will be understood to have been the cause of all our crises, each of which was designed to bring us closer to Him who is the Solution/Answer. He and his love, righteousness and authority have endured since He first began creating, and will endure forever.

That, then, speaks to our need to seek the Answer now in our personal crises. He being the Answer, in Him we find their meaning and their solutions. Only the One who has the wisdom and power to perfectly design and assign our crises can calm them. His cross, and our daily crosses, integrate us with Him and one another; each one of us having our own world and its components.

NOTE: In this little Thought lies the explanation of Isaiah 45:6(b)-7 – “I am the LORD, and there is no other, the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being [peace] and creating calamity [evil]; I am the LORD who does all these.” Crises are not accidental. They have purpose.

19. This Thought from DR is worthy of being presented:

We know that revelation is only by the grace of God, and that His revelation of Christ is progressive, but do we realize that consecrated believers, even prophets, can repeatedly interact with Christ in the flesh without recognizing Him?

Surprising as this may be, John the Baptist was such a man. Described by Jesus as a prophet greater than anyone else born of women (Matt. 11:9-11), John was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb, wherein he leaped for joy at the sound of Mary’s voice when she carried the Lord in her own womb (Luke 1:15, 41-44). Although his family lived in Judea, not Nazareth, John likely saw his cousin Jesus repeatedly as a child as His family traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish feasts throughout the years. John likely continued attending the feasts in Jerusalem when he lived in the desert, for he was a devout Jew; Jesus, of course, would have been there as an adult also. It was John himself who disclosed that he did not recognize Jesus as the One for Whom he had been preparing the way: “I myself did not know him…. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, “The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit” (John 1:31, 33). We can thus surmise that prior to Jesus’ baptism, *God’s great prophet John saw his cousin Jesus multiple times in the flesh without recognizing Him as the Christ.*

*Most of us* *do not recognize the Word made flesh either as He walks the earth today*. Since Pentecost, Christ is manifest in bodily form in us, His Church. Today, we are the Word made flesh; we are the holy Body of Christ! Per God’s magnificent design, every brother and sister is a vital member of Christ, serving one other with specific redemptive functions (see Rom. 12:3-8, 1Cor. 12:12-14, 27-28). May God graciously reveal Christ in the flesh to us in great measure from this day forward every time two or more of us are gathered together! Amen.

***It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” – Eph. 4:11-13.***

21. One of the most difficult things for the flesh to do is to become emotional at the right time and not emotional at the wrong time. A quick, uncontrolled, inadequately considered yieldedness to emotion is a definite character flaw. One term used to describe a person who is poorly in control of his emotions is “flakey.” Yes, we are responsible for our emotions, which means we are to be in control of them, not them of us. If not, we lack self-control; self-control being one of the results of walking humbly with the Lord – Gal. 5:16-25. A lack of self-control is evidence that we yet have a habit of walking in our flesh, at least in that area of our soul.

As an example, examine the emotion of anger. Anger at the wrong time occurs when we become angry after a wrong has been done to our self, but anger at the right time [can be] when a wrong has been done to another person or group outside of our self. So Paul could tell the saints at Ephesus [4:26] that they could be angry but should not sin. His personal hint [approved by the Holy Spirit] for not letting our anger lead us into sin was that we should not hold onto our anger past sundown of the day it commenced. That setting of a time limit to our anger also shows that we have responsibility to develop control over our emotions.

If we have any doubt about an emotion, whether it is proper and how long to enjoy, employ, endure, or permit it, take a look into future hours, days or years and see what its results may be if left unchecked.

I think that the idea of considering whether we should get emotional or not, or how long to allow our emotions to persist [and influence or control us], is strange to moderns -- even ridiculous. It is a widely-held idea that the bases for our emotions, which developed during our younger more formative years, built things uncontrollable into us so that when they are triggered we are not really responsible for ourselves or our actions. “That’s just me! They simply flare up! After all, didn’t God give us our emotions to use and enjoy!?” Yes, to use and enjoy, but not for our emotions to use and enjoy us.

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city” – Prov. 16:32. When we have developed self-control we can properly control others, lead others, and serve others.

“You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist” – Indira Gandhi, [1917-1984], Prime Minister of India, Hindu.

22. Here is a simple Thought. What does it mean to “open one’s mouth?” It means more than we might think when it is used in Matthew 5:2; 13:35; and Acts 8:35. Matthew 5:2 reads, “He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, ..” In Greek that term is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. It is the preface of a weighty saying. It is used when someone opens his heart and pours out his feelings and mind. It indicates the giving of an intimate teaching with no barriers; the speaking of central things. In this case Jesus was doing that to His disciples.

He still does that to His disciples.

23. Thoughts on prayer: 1) The Lord already knows what we need – Matt. 6:8. Don’t take too much time informing Him. But do take all of the time you need to tell Him how you feel about things and how others are being affected. Telling Him that is for your and my sakes, not His. 2) State the truth, which may be difficult to do on the spur of the moment and without a better grasp on the situation, so take your time. Praise Him and chat for a while before presenting your business. 3) When you have been given a grasp on what the Lord wants to do, say so! Check it out with Him. 4) Don’t try to convince or inform God. He knows which hospital room Mrs. Smith is in, and what that mean kid down the street has done – and what both need. Read Acts 4:24-31. They were at war. They and their King were ready.

24. Why do people attend Bible Studies? 1) This may be a surprise, but mainly for Christian fellowship. 2) For encouragement, sometimes called “a fresh infilling of the Holy Spirit.” 3) For Bible knowledge.

25. Do you want a challenge? Are you sure? This is one that won’t hurt. It may even set you free of one source of guilt feelings. My prediction is that it will bless you, greatly! That assurance comes from knowing you. Here it is: At the end of the day, such as at bedtime, say to the Lord, “Today I have done all things that You have commanded me to do.” If in turn you are convicted that you have not done all things that He has commanded you to do that day, ask Him to show you what those commanded omissions were, and repent of your disobedience. Tomorrow is another day.

Notice that “what He has commanded you to do” is not the same as “all good things that you could have done.” Jesus did all things that His Father told Him to do, but He did not do all good things that He could have done, like abolish world hunger, or drive out the Romans and set up His earthly kingdom, and many other good things. My hope for us is that we will watch more carefully throughout each day for those special things He will command us to do, and not get dragged down by those things we could have done [which here we will call “non-assigned to us” things], because we think we may not have done enough good things that day to fulfill our sense of sainthood.

26. I suppose [meaning to say that this is but a “little Thought”] the difference between “renewal” and “revival” is that in renewal the body yet has something of life within it and only receives a face lift to make it better, at least to make it look better. In revival, new life is given to a dead body; an entirely new life is implanted. Bible and church history show us that God’s time for revival is when someone’s or some group’s hour is at its darkest. That’s when His presence and power are shown more clearly apart from our own very limited efforts. When He shows His glory [obviousness], humanity is drawn to Him instead of to us or to our externals [personalities, liturgies, ministries].

Because we are talking about the Lord doing this work among His people, and His habit of putting His axe to the root of our tree instead of only trimming its outer, more visible branches, revival seems to be His preference over simply improving us. I suppose that, were we to hold to our more gracious non-biblical ways, allowing Him to change only our more obvious harmful ones, we could expect some plastic surgery. Plastic surgery endures but for a season because, once we choose the course of plastic surgery, occasional touch-ups are needed – due to the established attitude of continually wanting to appear better than we are, and due to the need of more and more touch-ups over time. New skin [life] is long lasting, but re-adjusted old skin [life] needs re-fixings.

Perhaps the greatest obstruction to revival on an appreciable scale is that we want more life our way instead of new life God’s way. We want our traditions revived, but at best we receive renewal – showing that we hold to our traditions more than we hold to Jesus. We hold to the displays of our faith more than we hold to the revelation to Jesus. The Holy Spirit [who is in charge] is looking for those who will throw themselves entirely upon the Lord – who will love the Lord with all that they are and have, and will love their neighbors as themselves. That’s the church covenant that He offers us. Revival “happens” when we accept His offer. Accepting it is much better than being left to ourselves, or than settling for a facelift.

Revival is Christ Jesus Himself – felt, heard, living, moving in and through His body -- us. It is heaven invading earth as He did 2,000 years ago.

27. Mull over this Thought until next month: Much of the goings on between us and the Lord and us and others in this earthlife are not designed primarily for our sake while here in this earthlife, but for our and others sakes in the millennium.