THOUGHTS OF OCTOBER, 2010

1. Why not start off this month with some negatives? The following ideas are all wrong!
2. Louder preaching is more effective. Comment: A preacher told me that if you don’t have anything to say, or if the preaching is going flat, show excitement and start shouting. Saints, avoid religious “cheer leading,” showoffs, and fakery. Be honest, truthful and caring.
3. Louder praying means more effectiveness in heaven. Comment: Jesus said we should get into our closet and let our needs be known in private to our Father in heaven. His life showed us how to do this.
4. Louder parties mean better times are had by all. Comment: Well, this is a carnal truth out of the party book – keep everyone standing, be sure that the room is small enough to crowd them together, turn up the music too loud to hear the normal voice, and don’t allow serious conversations.
5. Louder worship music is more worshipful. Comment: The truth is that as we draw closer to the Lord we get quieter and more awful [full of awe]. It’s fine for the kids to run about and shout while out in the yard self-focusing, but not when they come into the master’s house.
6. Love-actions are commonly costly to the loving one. To those not closely involved in the action, the love-action may seem to be unloving. Some examples:
7. When a brother is in financial need, it may be proper to help him financially, but perhaps not. If he is not open to financial counsel, perhaps needing to open his books to his brother-mentor, it is often advisable to not help that brother financially. The Lord’s admonition to not cast our pearls [money and counsel, in this case] before swine may apply, as may Paul’s in 2 Thessalonians 3:10.
8. A loud, mis-fitting singer’s voice in the congregation obviously needs help/training, for the sake of everyone including the singer. It is appropriate to offer that person a learner’s seat in choir practice, not necessarily to join the choir but to find that lost voice, plus to have mercy on the singer and those around. In some church circles, that person would not be “fed and clothed” in that way, but prayed about and tolerated as is. James [2:15-17] would disagree with that prayerful but inactive theology.
9. Anything of life together can be improved through practical, sacrificial love. There may be resistance on both sides – the one who needs improving but rejects it, and the one who has ability to improve the problem but will not.
10. When you want to get some assurance of how you are doing with the Lord, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you are doing with your family, your brothers or your “enemies.” Those are living report cards, easily readable, in our language, and understandable by our natural minds. The spiritual can be a bit foggy at times, especially when we are not being holy spiritual.

We can imagine our selves/souls better than is reality.

1. The Jews have two calendars. One is their civil calendar, which they “received” while enslaved in Egypt before being led out by Moses. The other is their sacred or religious calendar, which the Lord gave them after Egypt during their wilderness wandering with Moses. Actually, He started giving them their sacred calendar while He was preparing to deliver them out of Egyptian bondage: “Now the Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, this month shall be the beginning of months for you [Abib]; it is to be the first month of the year to you” – Ex. 12:1-2; 13:4. They were then in the seventh month of their civil calendar, which begins in September/October, which you may have noticed.
2. How many years passed between the year Moses brought Israel out of Egypt, until Solomon began his reign? Remember that those years covered the wilderness wandering years, the years of victory in the Promised Land under Joshua, the years of decline and defeat under their occasional Judges, and the years of Saul’s and David’s reigns.

See 1 Kings 6:1, subtracting 4 years to get the answer to my question. That gives us 476 years. They left Egypt in 1446 BC, Moses died in 1406 BC, and Solomon began his reign in 966 BC.

1. In the spirit of our current anti-governmentalism, here is a quote from Will Rogers, dated 1933. He said that if then-president Franklin Roosevelt had “burned down the capital, we would cheer and say, ‘Well at least we got a fire started, anyhow.’” Criticism of governments started in Genesis 2:20 [?] and increased big-time in Genesis 3.

In the millennium, when we have a perfect government here on earth, we will have the opportunity to be “perfect” citizens. [Yes, I know we now also have that opportunity.] That will be interesting to see and experience. It is my understanding that those whom Jesus judges to be overcomers during our lives here in our natural bodies will rule with Him then during the millennium as He sits on His throne there in Jerusalem. That will surely and greatly modify the overcomers’ typical citizenship functions and relationships compared to the non-overcomers/non-rulers. How might that work out?

Remember that those with authority in the kingdom [both then and now] must first be under authority of God and men.

1. A local brother who is known for his spiritual stability and maturity shared a personal observation: “I have never had an unsolvable problem in all of my life. Either I or someone in my life has had the answer.” That says a lot, including that he has kept good spiritual company and listened to sound advice.

He also said; “The Holy Spirit within us is more than we often think.” That is an understatement, is it not? Very true, and understated.

1. It has been said that we should “preach to reach, and teach to keep.” Selah.

Another good thought: “Good works do not produce good character, but good character produces good works.”

1. A disciple doesn’t reserve for himself any privacy – from the Lord -- and knows that the Lord may want him exposed by/to another saint or sinner, not just privately by/to God Himself. That requires a remarkable amount of death to self and cross carrying.

One thing you can do to judge yourself is to evaluate the openness of your prayers when in a group. Another is whether you are teachable about changing your prayers [length, manner, times, etc.]. A non-disciple will respond to being taught about his prayers with something like, “Don’t mess with my prayers!”

As in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, disciples actually seek to be taught about their prayers. They want to learn how to properly speak to their Father, the King. After all, do not nations teach their citizens and emissaries the proper protocol when they are approaching authorities? The children of earthly kings certainly do have an open door to their fathers, but they remember that he is still father and king, not their buddy. It is the same in the kingdom of God. Can our intimacy with the Lord be overplayed or wrongly played and become disrespectful? How have you and your Father worked that out at this point in your Family life?

1. When praying, do not let the situation [the topic of prayer] control you. It may be that the ship needs to go down [Paul’s experience] or that an ill person needs to die [Bathsheba’s first child by David; Lazarus’ experience], etc. As faithful and loving believers we are quick to step into a matter, to try to change it from a “bad” situation to a “good” situation, not seeing the greater value or overview of why the Lord designed the “bad” situation in the first place.

It’s like a mother wanting to teach her daughter the ways of God. She began by teaching her daughter how to bake a cake. She gave her daughter a taste of the oil, then the flour, continuing with each component one at a time. The daughter wanted to reject almost all of the ingredients due to her evaluation of each separately. But the mother used each ingredient to make a delicious and beautiful cake, showing her that the final result in the hands of a master cook or of God produced excellent results. Every ingredient was needed, was measured exactly, and was added in a timely manner.

1. Disciples, enjoy reading Psalm 119:25-40. Our lives are full of grace, as we are reminded while reading those verses. Our hearts and minds go “amen; that’s for me. God has been merciful.”
2. It’s sad, but religion can be a source of conflict in society – whether the religion is spiritual or carnal, righteous or unrighteous. There are many examples when one’s faith has been a positive force for strengthening a civil society, producing a greater degree of tolerance, and more civilized moral principles.

Why, then, does religion sometimes have such a disruptive effect on some cultures and societies? In those cases, it is obvious that religious labels, doctrinal differences, and outward displays of religious practices are no light matters. Thereafter follows debate which can lead to tolerance or intolerance.

Especially if there is intolerance, the state may enter the debate. The state is not usually reluctant to make its own proclamations about religious truth and practices. First, it usually asserts its right to be arbiter. Then it takes control. As if that is not bad enough, the next step is for politicians to exploit religious differences – just like it does differences of skin color, financial status, nationality, etc. Politicians do have their goals and methods, which are initiated in the name of tolerance and equality. You know the end result – removal of all religion from the public square.

One of America’s contributions to the world has been its creation of circumstances in which all believers and nonbelievers can co-exist peacefully. It has not been perfect, but our common commitment to law and reasonableness have worked well. Negative forces have been converted into tolerance, or overt hostility.

One thing on which we can work together toward the positive is to reduce the influence of politics to its proper sphere. Civil government is not the answer to all problems. Another thing is to mend our ways, because a virtuous society is the only society that can handle freedom.

Here in Corpus Christi, we are seeing exemplary examples of commitment to faith and freedom in our civic, business, and religious leaders. Thank you, Lord.

1. For years our political leaders in America have been moving us from freedom toward socialism. Our present politicians are moving us even faster and farther in that direction. Europe has provided us a living, breathing case-study on how expansive government, increased taxes, and overgrown welfare programs [for the poor and the rich] drive entire countries to the brink of moral and economic collapse.

If we do not develop a moral, political, and economic culture which understands the deep deficiency of politicians and citizens using the state to live at the expense of others – move over, Rome.

1. This evening, October 24th, a number of churches canceled their services and held a joint service at the city’s open-air amphitheater on the bay. The event was billed as the Salt and Light Summit, and featured speakers, alternating between preachers and civic leaders. The civic leaders were the District Attorney, the Chief of Police, and the Sheriff. Also speaking were the managers of 3 radio stations and 1 T-V station. All speakers were committed Christians.

The Lord is working.

1. What may be the personal and family and kingdom of God value of parents and other family members doing such as tossing a child into the air and catching it? How about the obvious fun of it. Beyond that, the child learns to trust the family in precarious circumstances.
2. In situations such as when something goes wrong with the kids in a family, the man’s first thoughts go to what can be done to correct the problem. The woman’s first thoughts go to how she may have caused or contributed to the problem.

I want to say that those particular responses are appropriate. As the mother and homemaker, the woman is present at the root of all matters children. As the father, he must provide and protect.

Obviously, if either has a tainted definition of what is meant by those words, there can be unwarranted guilt and improper actions.

1. Kosher laws concerning meat, which require that the animal be bled before finally killing it, have been under fire by the animal rights people. It has been 66 years since a nation has forbidden the process, which is essential for practicing Jews, but now New Zealand has outlawed its production or importation. The nation’s Jews have taken the government to court, so the law is not yet enforced. Observant Jews must have kosher food.

Would you like to guess which nation last forbad the practice? It was Nazi Germany. Anywhere socialism rears its falsely compassionate heart it creates a race to see which leads it first to failure – financial collapse or totalitarianism.

1. I will leave you with a short list of 18 thoughts this month, the last one being “Obstacles and hardships in life are inevitable, but misery is optional.”

By God’s grace, I have decided that the Lord owes me nothing. He has given me Himself and has made available all that He has. “He and His” flow steadily and abundantly toward me according to His wisdom and love. I ask no more than Him and that which issues from Him, but He owes me nothing.

What a God Who has us!