THOUGHTS OF JANUARY, 2011

1. God will always give us insight into that which He gives us oversight. Of course, we do not need to accept either.
2. The Lord of the church has us covered every way – over and under, forward and backward, left and right, etc. Consider this which He has instituted and commanded us to do, in order to keep us moving forward in all areas of life [opening our eyes, disturbing our self-complacency]: 1. Seek out a brother. Confess your sins/faults to him. 2. When a brother is snared in a sin, go to him. If he does not repent, take another brother. If he still does not repent, take him to the church.

 We see that when we will not go for help, He sends help to us. I’m fortunate to have that process working in my life, in both directions.

1. Knowledge of a brother’s need/sin gives us responsibility toward that brother. We may not meet all of that need, but we can pray and can initiate needed assistance from other sources.
2. Our theologies can be enemies to our sanctification. The religious leaders, well-steeped in religious traditions [much of which was correct and good, because the Law was good], asked the Lord why His disciples transgressed the tradition of the elders? He told them that their traditions transgressed the commandment of God. How many transgressions of the commandments of God do you have in your congregation/denomination? Need help?
3. I have Thought and said this before, probably last month or so: “Faithful obedience always accomplishes that for which God designed it, no matter the apparent outcome.”
4. Walk with the Lord and you will walk with the wise.
5. Offer that which you have. It will be sufficient.
6. When not living in close unity, first look to yourself.
7. If the Lord is offering you something/someone, don’t refuse the offer. See Matthew 23:37-39; Acts, 13:26, 46; 28:28; and Revelation 22:11-12. He is patient and long-suffering, slow to anger, and desires the best for us. Without any “but,” remember that although His love endures forever, His offers do not.
8. In Judges 2:20 through 3:8 we have described for us the workings of man and God, on both of those levels. On Israel’s level, they did evil in the Lord’s eyes so they were punished. Since they had rejected the spiritual and were living in the natural, they thought they had simply been overcome by a more powerful force, the Philistines. They thought, “perhaps we need to regroup and try harder.” So, they had to suffer for a while longer, until their spiritual vision returned, they repented and called out to the Lord for help on His terms.

 From the heavenly viewpoint, the Lord withdrew his power and functional presence from His people. They had never been “on their own,” because He had always been working His good will in their lives. Their defeats and slavery were designed to test [stress for strengthening] them. He had not allowed His people to have victory. And, He prepared this plan beforehand, so that the younger, inexperienced ones among Israel could be taught how to fight God’s way and have God’s victory.

 All of that applies to us, also – 1 Cor. 10:6, 11. There is no way for God’s children to escape His love.

1. While reading the prophets, you may already have noticed that 4 of them prophesied to the southern kingdom, Judah, composed of the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Those 4 prophets are Joel, Micah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. The northern kingdom, which retained the overall name of the nation, Israel, was composed of the remaining 10 tribes.

 There were things in prophesies to the southern kingdom that were outstandingly different from the prophecies to the northern kingdom. Foremost, in my mind, is that there were many prophecies of Judah’s return to the land after being taking into slavery because of their sins. The northern kingdom was to be scattered and not restored.

 Additional prophecies to the southern kingdom were about the Messiah’s second coming and the overall timeline from Judah’s captivity in Babylon to the millennium. Judah was slowly becoming a mess, was self-willed, and rebellious. Yet, the Lord focused them on the hope that is in their Messiah and His kingdom.

 Habakkuk was the last of the minor prophets to preach in Judah before the Babylonian captivity. His name means “to embrace.”

1. Character is the ability to do what is right despite contrary forces in our emotions and situations. King Solomon had good character in his earlier years, didn’t he. When the Lord asked him what he wanted, Solomon asked for wisdom. The Lord was so pleased with Solomon’s choice, and He desired to give so much wisdom to Solomon, that He first had to enlarge Solomon’s ability to receive that gift. See 1 Kings 4:29. Have you noticed that before the Lord gave you a spiritual or natural gift that He stretched you, like He did Solomon?

 It has been said that victory starts with wisdom, moves into a strategy; then comes victory.

1. In Jackson, Mississippi, 67% of public school children have no father at home. That has produced a great loss of character and personal identification. Considering that, what could we say about those 3 young men – Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah [aka Shadrrach, Meshach and Abed-nego]? How about “they had good fathers?” When everyone else bowed, they stood. When their disobedience was noticed, they stood. When they were punished, the Lord stood with them.

 I thank the Lord for their testimony to their parentage.

1. In America there are 300,000 new cases of STDs [sexually transmitted diseases] every week. That’s roughly .1% of the population. Where are the fathers?
2. Manhood and Christ-likeness are one and the same. Jesus was our model of what a real man is. [Before you accept that automatically, remember that He beat up people in the “church,” enjoyed alcoholic beverage, did not keep a regular job, influenced others to leave their good jobs and families, stirred up social unrest, and associated freely with reprobates.]
3. Victory is always on the other side of a fight. Sometimes when we pray for a victorious life we are asking for it automatically, without the battle. Can it come that way? How have you come into your victorious life; by not having to fight or by fighting?
4. When a husband acts like a child, it forces his wife to act like his mother. Some men marry a woman who is willing to fill that role. Some women rebel at their husbands attempts to push them into that role. There are entirely different dynamics between a couple when the man is seriously disabled and the wife must assume most of the husband-type family responsibilities, compared to the couple when the man simply abdicates his manhood responsibilities.
5. There is a vast difference between optimism and faith. Optimism is a cheerful hopefulness; a hope that good things will come, eventually. It will wear out in time or under difficult circumstances. Faith is a substance. It is based on bedRock [not misspelled]. Time and difficult circumstances try to dislodge faith, but cannot. It’s good to be optimistic, but switch to faith as soon as possible.
6. This is a true story. Today I was told of a person who, in a huff, recently resigned her position on the board of directors of a corporation when she heard that someone was spreading the word that she was not committed to the corporation.

 Proof positive!

1. Jehovah did not often chastise His people, Israel. He was very patient with them, sending and re-sending them His word by His prophets. It was common that “He sent them His word and healed them” – Ps. 107:20. However, when they did not listen to Him and would not turn from their wayward ways, in due course [sometimes 200 years later] He would chastise them. Here is the point: When He chastised them, He really laid it on! He “jerked them up, laid into them with a strong hand to their rump, and did not stop until they stopped kicking and shaking their rebellious fists at Him.”

 That’s more than a history lesson. It’s a parenting lesson for adults. Speak often to your wayward children, correct them as needed, don’t spank them too often, but when you do spank or otherwise chastise them, keep it going until they stop accusing and threatening you. You must break the rebellious spirit in them, humble them, not letting up until they are submitted to your will. They must know that they are the losers in their self-initiated conflict of wills. That quality of punishment reduces its frequency.

 If you love your children, you will behave and govern them as a God-like parent should.

1. A preventive action that succeeds will always be criticized [as unnecessary].
2. Here is the basis for every Jewish holiday: “They tried to kill us, we won, let’s eat.”
3. The Lord is with you, absolutely. Everything He does [and that’s the only way things happen] is for His glory and your eternal betterment.
4. When the Lord’s sheep are a dirty grey, all black sheep are more comfortable.
5. We are in a time of breakdown of law and order that started with the courts, not with the typical criminal element. That shows corruption of the worst type.
6. Christianity is not a religion of logic, but of preposterous beliefs. God is 3 persons, yet one; God became a human by being born of a virgin who was conceived by God; He only did good, but the people for whom He did good, killed Him; He arose from the dead and walked again among humanity; He was seen to ascend into the sky; He is coming back but only for those who believe in Him; etc.

 Doesn’t that sound like quantum physics, which no one wholly understands, but it works? And the best thing either has going for it is that it is unquestionably correct.

 27. Here is something to remember when we may be too un-focused. Nothing matters when everything does.

28. To our faithful brothers who hold [too] tightly to Truth: “Hold to what you have, but don’t squeeze the life out of it. Give it some air space – room for every word of Truth to be bathed in love.

29. If you could no fail, what would you do?

30. The Bible shows us that Satan and his other evil fallen angels are capable of evil and are the driving force behind the world’s [universe’s?] evil. He retained a high level of authority and power over the world system after he rebelled and was “cast down” upon the earth. That is shown in the book of Job. In fact, he appears in heaven before the Lord. He acted in a high-handed manner before the throne of God, and continued it when he tempted Jesus. He has lost perspective, considering himself the ranking authority here, yet remains in the realms of heaven and still possesses the earth – possibly for aeons [evidence seems to suggest that he sinned long before his temptation of man].

 So, why does the Lord allow Satan to continue? Suggestion [I’ll not call it an “answer.”]: If God had destroyed Satan outright when he sinned, or when he continued sinning and influencing so much of God’s creation to join him in rebellion, God would have been open for criticism. He could have been accused of being intolerant and impatient, fearful of letting Satan survive and perhaps rise up against his Creator. It would have been said of God that He used power to overcome another power – which was Satan’s method. Satan’s world empires have been built by brute power, and in due time overcome by another brute power.

 You have noticed that the Lord does not zap us and beat on us to make us behave. He does chastise us while covering us with His love – although the devil convinces some of us that God’s chastisements are a result of his getting-even anger. Our original downfall and our subsequent failures are covered by the redeeming blood of Christ and His finished work on the cross. In regards to the patience of God, Satan is benefitting from God’s goodness, but he will not repent. When the Lord says He will turn all things to good for those who love Him and are submitted to Him we are blessed, but Satan is angered. To varying degrees, each of us who repented and were cleansed of our sin and sins has been rescued from the grip of sin. Only evil resists the rescue.

31. The operations of covenant are: 1) promise and be promised, 2) forgive and be forgiven, 3) serve and be served, and 4) know and be known [transparency].

32. As the Lord moves ahead in Corpus Christi we pick up news/testimonies from different places. A saint on duty in one of the street ministries in the dumpiest part of town was told this by a street guy. He said that there are only 1 or 2 prostitutes on the streets now in the area, compared not long ago to 50. The saint testified that there are now 2 homosexual bars instead of previously 5, and that the homosexual church is about to close due to failing funds and members.

33. This comes under the label of “spiritual clues.” 1) In a congregation or denomination, the presence of female ministers who have authority over males. Church and family headship is always male, unless men are not available [by choice or non-existence]. In that case, the Lord will call and appoint and anoint female headship, and it will not be inferior. It will simply reflect a certain weakness in that group of saints. That weakness need not be in the female minister. 2) Among a group of saints, the depth/shallowness of conversation is a reflection of its immaturity/maturity. Our minds and conversations are where our hearts are. 3) If you hear someone saying, “God would never ask me to …,” you know that the Lord has told him to do it.

 Seeing these things is no big task, and it is not unrighteous judgmentalism. We are instructed to judge all things [1 Cor. 2:15] and that the Lord’s desire is that we discern such things [Prov. 25:2]. It is unrighteous judgment when discernment alienates us from the other.

34. The Lord delivers us from our sins in proportion to our hatred of our sins. If we are gluttons who love our food, it will do no good for us to pray for deliverance while we are yet in love with food, and design our schedules around opportunities to overeat.

35. I think that sometimes we pray to be delivered from our humanity. That would be to request our earthly death. It is the Lord’s plan that we be human, with human limitations. He has not planned for us to be without our faults and sinnings, which will always be with us. Yes, He has set us a high standard, that we should be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect [Matt. 5:48], but [not using this as an excuse] we will never attain to that mark while here on earth in this body. My point is that we might often look at our frail humanity [that’s different from our sins] and pray wrongly for deliverance from it. While we are here, we must abide in and deal with our humanity.

36. The Lord determines [decides] to do or to not do various things, but He is not determined [obstinately struggling against opposition] to do anything. In Him is no strain or sweat.

37. Psalm 92:14(a) is gradually becoming one of my favorites.

38. In places and among certain of God’s family, the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4:11 is thin or non-existent. I don’t suppose to know all of the reasons why, but in my exposure to those saints it seems that it is due to lack of Bible teaching, false humility, and fear/awe. It may have something to do also with an exposure to false labeling, over-labeling, and self-labeling – all of which understandably discourage the young or weak.

39. Why has the Lord gathered you together with the present saints in your life? If you are not gathered with some saints, why are you not? His plan is to build His church, which is more than just purchasing material and laying it about the Foundation. He wants to build. It’s not enough to be a card-carrying member of His family – he wants to form us into a well-coordinated, functioning unit. Can you take a step backward and honestly appraise this matter, always willing to include yourself [1 Cor. 11:28-32]?

40. I have a dear brother who, after he has talked at some length, says to those gathered, “I don’t want to do all of the talking.” When he says that, I know he is about to launch another topic for another extended time.

41. At a supper party of saints tonight I was chatting with a faithful sister who had a considerable amount of wrinkles, at least on her face. When I asked her how she was doing, she said she was well in all ways. I asked about perhaps a few aches and pains. She said she had none at all because she gives them and all other health matters to the Lord and He keeps her quite well. So, trying to bring a bit of honesty and humor to the conversation, I asked her what she does with her wrinkles. She said she also gives them to the Lord. With that bit of information, I understood how she deals with her daily health complaints – solid spiritual denial of their impact on her life as she gives them to the Lord. The saints have everything that unbelievers have, but they handle them faithfully and without complaint – rising above them. While doing that, we do need to avoid simple denial.