THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2015

1. Ah, happiness! What a delight. Thank you, Lord, for inventing it. Its reasonable pursuit is usually rewarded, even in the darkest of times. As Steve Kloves [1960-present], American screenwriter, said about seeking happiness, “Remember to turn on the lights.” In other words, understand the situation before trying to change it into something that would produce only personal happiness.

Walking in the light is where fellowship and happiness are abundant. I think they come from understanding what is really going on in our lives and in the world, even in dark times. The communion of the saints [including with Saint Jesus] lifts us on eagles’ wings above the dark, noisome storm.

2. Get ready for a dose of cesspool perspective, for only a few minutes. Ready?

We are awash in a sea of untruth. The truth is unknown; as is love. The world is messed up and getting messier and the church is in the tank with the world. The truth is called a lie, and lies are called the truth. Thank God that He always sustains a remnant.

In view of that, here are some questions for us to mull over with the Lord. They may require some quiet time alone with Him:

What is true? Answer: The original reality of God Himself, as partly revealed to Adam and Eve. He and His word are not evolving truths (such as some consider the U. S. constitution, for example), but He does give us progressive revelation. The difference is that each revelation entirely agrees with previous revelations.

What is the truth? That which He has revealed to us. Jesus Himself is the full manifestation of the truth. He breathed the truth -- Prov. 12:17. Paul’s depth of the truth allowed him to write Romans 9:1-5.

Who knows the truth? Those who have the mind of Christ – 1 Cor. 2:16. We corporately [can] have the same level of in-our-flesh understanding that Jesus had. We are offered that now in our human lives and circumstances. It is costly on our flesh. It requires that disciples have a joint cross walk. The mind of Christ is an offer from God and a supreme challenge to our flesh – to form a body lead by its head.

The world has no solutions to its problems. They are unsolvable apart from the Lord’s perspectives and instructions. Force is the world’s first, ongoing, and last resort as it seeks solutions. Humble obedience is God’s first, ongoing, and last resort.

When should the truth be spoken? Explain your answer. And how should it be spoken?

Is the truth always the truth, in every time and place? Should it be adjusted, sometimes?

Does the truth always love? Does it always seem loving? Example: A loud, sharp command to, “Stop!” when your child is about to run into traffic is very loving. Consider when Jesus became more and more loving toward the Pharisees as He came closer to the cross, calling them hypocrites, etc. They were about to have their Messiah’s blood on their hands, and the blood of their nation. In love, He put His finger on their sore spots and pressed.

What makes the truth loving? Is it automatically loving when given anytime and anywhere, or only when it is perceived as being loving?

Should the truth be spoken when it will not [or cannot] be understood? Is there “progressive truth/revelation?” [Ex.: “I have more to say but you cannot understand it now” – John 16:12.]

Who is to speak the truth? Only those who do it lovingly? Gently? Humbly?

Should we bother speaking only when we have the truth? Is silence the only alternative?

How do we know truth from my/others’/popular/authority’s opinion?

What are the dangers of knowing the truth? 1) Not sharing the truth with others gets us in trouble with our Father. 2) Sharing the truth with others gets us in trouble with religious people. 3) Self-righteousness. 4) Judgmentalism.

3. Those early Corinthian Christians were scoundrels! They were a different sort of humanity than we modern-day Christians [NOT!!].

Within their religio-social group [church] they had immorality, law suits, idolaters, homosexuals, thieves, coveters, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers!! – 1 Cor. 6:9-11. So, they were just like we are, unfortunately for them and for us.

The problem was not that they were [and we are] sinners, but that they were committed to continue living their lives in those sins. They had been plucked out of sin and death and brought to life in Christ, but were still living in the mindset of “whatever seems good to me, I should do it.” It was Paul’s assigned task to teach them differently, now that they were able to walk out of darkness into the light.

All of our sins need to be brought to Jesus. Only His powerful, redeeming grace can fully heal and restore us.

4. Humanly speaking, who is watching you? Of course, our kids are watching, as are our spouses and co-workers. But so are acquaintances and strangers. The Lord is dangling us before their eyes, saying, “Watch this one.” That’s when we are at rest, at work, in trials and in victories. We are God’s kids. Corporately we are His body on earth, examples of Him, of humans whose lives have been transformed. We are the world’s best available pictures of God.

Elijah was on the spot and confident – 1 Kings 18. It was time for the people to “get off the fence.” If Jehovah was God, they were to worship and follow Him; if Baal was god, they were to worship and follow him. Elijah set it up; it was the time of decision. [It is always the time of decision for those watching us.] The people gathered around and Elijah publicly clarified the situation. The people watched silently --v. 21. Elijah was faithful [as he often was], and Jehovah was faithful [as He always is]. Our “cloud of witnesses” [Heb. 12:1-3] are silent and watchful, hoping to see the real thing, some so they can get off of their painful picket fences and go for it. They are not passively watching; they are actively watching and hoping.

Jesus had a crowd of silent watchers when the religious leaders challenged Him with the woman taken in the act of adultery – John 8:1-11. The Law said she should be stoned to death. He Himself, creation’s Creator, had whispered the words of that Law in Moses’ ear hundreds of years earlier. What would He do now that He was embedded in His own creation and under the limits of His other createds? The crowd watched. They did not condemn the woman, nor did they intercede for her. They watched. This was important to those on the fence. They were not disappointed. Their lives were changed. They saw reality [truth, patience, understanding, grace, and mercy].

We are being watched – some cheering us onward, some helplessly hoping, some to find fault. Let’s take advantage of our opportunity.

5. Rabbi Baal Shem Tov [1698-1760], Ukrainian teacher and mystic, wrote, “Fear builds walls to bar the light.” It is amazing how fearful I have been at times; how I have yielded to fear and acted under it. It barred the door and closed the drapes so the light could not penetrate – for a while. Fear will catch us unaware and come with a flood. The preparation for victory against fear is to walk daily with the Lord and our brothers, living Jesus’ first and second commandments. Living in our love casts out our fear.

6. “You have enemies? Good. That means you’ve stood up for something, sometime in your life.” – Winston Churchill [1874-1965], U. K. Prime Minister, statesman, British army officer, writer, artist, historian, Nobel Prize in Literature, war correspondent, member of the Anglican branch of Christianity.

7. “Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.” – Earl Nightingale [1921-1989], American radio personality and motivational speaker, writer, one of 12 surviving Marines on board the USS Arizona during the Pearl Harbor attack. He is famous for saying, “We become what we think about,” which occurred to him after reading/hearing the New Testament say over and over to him, “What you sow, you shall reap.”

8. “As my sufferings mounted I soon realized that there were two ways in which I could respond to my situation – either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course. – Martin Luther King, Jr. [1929-1968], American civil rights activist, Baptist minister. He learned to make that choice from Jesus, from Paul, from Joseph in Egypt, and from others who lived the reality of Christ.

9. Let’s stay up-to-date on the latest of Genesis 11:6-8-type of science and God’s thoughts related to the subject: Scientists have networked the brains of 3 monkeys to form a living computer that can perform tasks and solve problems. It gives them super-monkey brain power. The brains were connected individually to a computer that controlled an animated screen image representing a robotic arm, placing electrodes into brain areas involved in movement. By synchronizing their thoughts, the monkeys were able to move the arm to reach a target. Having accomplished that, the scientists arranged that each monkey could control the arm in only one dimension. The monkeys still managed to make the arm reach the target by working together.

Now we have been updated on mankind “being able to do anything we can imagine if we set our minds to it.” Have you noticed along this way that our thinking has become deranged, languages have become confused, words have been re-defined, right being called wrong, and wrong called right?

10. “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out” – Ezekiel 20:34. Currently and for the last year or so Europe’s Jews have been returning to Israel in large numbers. Why? Those countries have again seen a rise in anti-Semitism. Israel’s re-formed nation [and their God] is calling them back to the Land.

Europe is the same continent on which the holocaust took place – and that even in the short span of my lifetime, not 500 years ago! The entire Christianized world said, “Never again!” But the spiritual activity has changed from “repent” to “repeat.” Hitler repeated big lies until they were believed. The Deceiver is doing the same thing now, lying about Israel being the “new Nazi regime putting the Palestinians through a modern-day holocaust.” The current European “beast” is anti-Semitism. It must rise again until the Lord returns to receive the repentance of His earthly people, Israel, and to fulfill His promises to the patriarchs and millions of other believers. That beast will not die until then.

There was a meeting recently in Jerusalem of the leaders of 25 of Europe’s Jewish communities. They made note that now is the time for them to take action. They must return to the Land now or make plans for a later emergency evacuation of Europe’s Jews. We should be struck speechless over that! The average return of French Jews has been less than 2,000 yearly, but this year the number will be around 9,000. Bible-believing Christians stand with Israelites everywhere, even while we ourselves are coming under attack. Israel is not always right, but Israel is always Israel and God’s word stands!

At the same time, Israel’s more faithful [Orthodox] rabbis are in high expectation of their Messiah’s [second] coming, teaching that His coming is imminent. When their leading Ultra-Orthodox rabbi hears a loud sound he is reported as saying, “Perhaps the Messiah has arrived.”

11. Mathew Ayairga was one of 21 Egyptians beheaded in February, 2015 by Moslems. He was the only one of the 21 who was not a Christian when taken captive. All 21 were given the opportunity to live, by denying Christ. All refused the offer. Mathew’s refusal, being a non-Christian, was different from that of the other 20. The terrorists assumed he was also a Christian. When asked, “Do you reject Christ?,” he responded, “Their God is my God.” The video of their death shows that their last words were, “Ya Rabbi Yasou,” – “My Lord Jesus.” When faced with his life or death choice, Mathew saw the faith and peace of the 20 and chose their God. That sounds like Luke 23:43.

Those men were not super-Christians. They came from poor, illiterate families. They were arrested while looking for work. They were ordinary men like you and me. Right?

12. I know many of my eternal brothers and sisters, but only a few of the grand sum of them. I and the ones with whom I am involved in my daily goings-on must have time and place schedules [even if some don’t commit to keeping them well] in order to bring order to our and others lives, and to show that we, like our God, are people who are faithful to our word. So, we have the creations of time and place to relate to properly by ruling over them, not allowing them to rule over us.

13. Let’s do some self-examination – briefly. There is God; He is holy, perfect, and dispenses justice – without fail. For the penitent [those who acknowledge our lack of holiness, perfection, and justice -- called sin] He has made a straight and narrow way through the impenetrable maze toward living forever with Him – Jesus Christ the man, by trusting Him to do away with the things in us and our behavior that prevent our present and eternal union with Him. He offers to take our hand for the walk.

Then there is us. We are weak, rebellious and ignorant. We do not want to call sin, sin. We are o.k. as we are. That attitude prevents penitence, without which we slam the door in our only Redeemer’s face, leaving no other route for our redemption. Condemnation and eternal judgment is our journey. Along our wrong way we cannot tolerate those who have found the right Way, especially when they notice our wrong way and try to help us onto the right Way. There are clues to our being on the wrong way:

Clue No. 1: “If I believe in Christ that is all I need for being on the right Way. I don’t need to change morally, even in those ways required in His written word, the Bible.” That indicates that my belief is simply mental assent, the same assent the Devil and his demons have, although ours may give us warm and fuzzy feelings. Lack of conviction of sin, especially of our more precious sins, is evidence of this clue.

Clue No. 2: This clue allows us to come to Jesus without repentance, without dedication to change, without His being able to live His life through us. We do not see ourselves as lost sinners who need a Savior from ourselves and our ways. Loving God with all that we are and have, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, means something other than what it says.

Clue No. 3: The false doctrine of love, which is unmasked when sin is called wicked, evil and depraved. The mind of Christ cannot be developed in us if we have not been born again spiritually, transforming us from being creatures of death into creatures of life. An old saying goes, “If you love me you must love [accept] my dog.” Spiritually, it says, “If you love me you must love [accept] my sin.” That has some truth to it, but it does not mean we are to tolerate, agree with, and openly accept the sin. Instead, we must clarify it as sin and work with the believer to cleanse the sin from his or her life. If we hate their sin and love the sinner we will show and tell sinners what they need to know instead of being partakers with them by keeping our silence. [If you are resistant to this idea, it is probably because you can imagine only doing it wrongly, without true love, humililty, and wisdom.]

14. I have heard it said that, “Too much bathing will weaken you.” That old time saying referred to never bathing more than once a month, and not bathing at all during the winter. Some habits make us particularly distinctive, don’t they.

Then there is a saying that is meant to disturb us: “Too much rest is rust.” – Walter Scott [1771-1832], Scottish novelist, playwright, and poet. That can be compared to a saying that is commonly attributed to Baptist evangelists: “Better to burn out than to rust out.”

15. The Greek word for sin is hamartia. Its root word is hamartano, which means to miss the mark so as not to share in a prize. As we hit the mark we “win prizes.” We are offered high prizes, saints. The better we do the better or the higher prizes we receive. Jesus encouraged us to hit the mark, to lay up rewards, the more the better, the kind that cannot be lost between now and the time they will benefit us. Additional scriptures show that, indeed, we will have some differences in the hereafter. Some are shown in the Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21. Selah.

16. Repentance is a gift; one of our greatest although not the greatest. Repentance is a refreshing cleansing after a hot day of filthy labor. It is a warm shower and shampoo after lolling about in the slime pit. It makes you feel good all over, and it should, because it is good for our body and soul.

But repentance is not all me-centered. It is also life-giving to others as they see their prayers for us answered. Or, as they are encouraged by our humble example. It is for beginners and near-enders.

17. I suppose we are not surprised at the Thought that we all have our personal opinions of how God is. When He exposed Himself to us He knew He would be subjected to all sorts or interpretations, both good and bad. We have not had Him “in hand” for many of these millenniums for us to examine, and didn’t do real good when we did have Him, but that seems not to deter us. We devise special methods of investigation, such as scientific, religious, spiritual, drug-induced states, archeological, and just simple very individual imaginations that show what kind of God we wish we had.

Do you think we could do better if we had Him here now, again in the flesh, to be submitted to all our examinations? They didn’t. But we do have “the least of these” with us now – Matt. 25:40-45. How are we doing?

18. “Is he alone who has courage on his right hand and faith on his left hand?” – Charles Lindberg [1902-1974], American aviator, Christian, author, inventor, military officer, explorer, social activist, and the first to fly solo non-stop from America to Europe [Paris]. He knew he was not alone.

19. Isn’t it good to be with those among whom you can be yourself? You don’t have to be a particular person or in a special place or situation to be able to be yourself – just be yourself? Being a special person or in a special place is fine, productive, and rewarding, but being only yourself is also fine, productive, and rewarding.

Here is the Thought. Is the Lord also pleased when He is among those with whom He can be Himself, meaning without filling requests or settling problems? Does He especially enjoy those times when He is simply enjoyed? If so, give them to them.

20. We are always calculating, checking on “Is this right for me to do?” Sometimes our “yes” or “no” is moderated by “Do I really want to do this?” and “What are my chances of success/getting away with it,” called “counting the cost.” Our minds are a continually running computer. Gradually we come into doing what the Lord wants, much of which by then matches with what we want.

21. There is a modern [I think] and morbid [obviously] thing going on in America. It appears to be a worldwide process but I’ll focus on our selves. I see it as the normal becoming enslaved to and controlled by the abnormal. The abnormal is coming out of the gutter and becoming our standard, and the normal is being downgraded into the trash bin. It can be said that “the world is again turning itself upside down” -- Acts 17:6. It is illogical, powerful, and evil thus should be labeled satanic and is perceived by the insightful as being a major spiritual movement against God’s truth and His righteous ones.

Can you see it? Are you surprised? How are you handling it? Is it hunker-down time, or time for us to attack? What kind of attack? How about stand up, speak up, and clear the air of our slide into confusion and compromise, starting with us – the church?

Be encouraged by reviewing 2 Thessalonians 2:11 (1-17).

22. Abraham was faithful, not perfect but full of faith and thus had long-term stability. His nephew, Lot, was also a person of faith but he was not “full” of it. Thus he wobbled, was unstable in the long run. When Abraham and Lot became so prosperous that they had to separate geographically, Abraham gave Lot the first choice of the land. Lot chose the well-watered and grassy part, both having large herds of animals. That left Abraham with the least desirable land. Abraham presented no complaint to God or to Lot. At first, Lot camped in the countryside of his land. Then He moved into Sodom, an evil city. Next we see him sitting in the gates of Sodom, which meant he was one of the city leaders who sat to govern the city and dispense justice. Lot, a believer, became somewhat of a sorry scoundrel. But, remember, he was a believer. As a believer he got out of some serious troubles with the Lord, and some with man. However, he lost his testimony among the Sodomites. When he attempted to warn them about their sins and imminent judgment, they threw his words back in his face. They told him that he was no better than they were, and they were right in regards to the way he lived.

The church finds itself in Lot’s position. It is equally involved in unrighteous living as was Lot in Sodom. Our pronouncements have no or little authority in the world. Our testimony is weak. We are called hypocrites because of our own scandals. Like Lot, we cannot lead our cities to safety in the Lord because they will not follow us. Even our families are like Lot’s, meaning that his wife and sons would not heed his warnings. Much of our own story can be read in Genesis 19.

23. To sharpen our memory of history: Israel was in Egypt for 430 years from the time of Jacob and family’s arrival to join Joseph, until Moses led them out into the wilderness toward the Promised Land. During their first 30 years in Egypt they had flourished; then Joseph died and a new Pharaoh ascended to the throne. After that they were enslaved for 400 years until their exodus with Moses.

As with Israel, the Lord was and still is faithful to His word and to His people. Our chastisements only last until we have learned our lesson and turned back to Him.

24. Another history matter: Joseph’s Egyptian wife was from the ancient city of On, later called Heliopolis, and then Cairo. Some things, places, and people just don’t go away; they change their name or appearance and endure.

25. “If you think adventure is dangerous, try routine – it is lethal” – Paulo Cuelho [1947-present], Brazilian novelist, songwriter, Roman Catholic. That’s a good thought, although being faithful in our routines is life-giving to self and others.

26. If you don’t have an ethical, moral, Christian example to encourage you along your way in the family, at work, or at school, what should you do? Answer: Be the example.

27. When is genuine repentance before the Lord not sufficient? Answer: When 1) restitution is yet possible, 2) asking for forgiveness of the human(s) whom you sinned against is yet possible, and 3) when humble penance would strengthen your soul against further similar temptation.

28. The current names of the nations scheduled to invade peaceful Israel in the latter days are Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. All of those nations are Islamic. Our King is coming. He will rescue His earthly people [Israel] and establish His kingdom on earth in Jerusalem.

29. John called it “born again” – John 3:7. Luke called it “saved” – Acts 2:21. Titus called it “regeneration” [rebirth] – Titus 3:5. Paul called it “quickened” [made alive] – Eph. 2:1. Whatever it is called, it must happen to us, said Jesus – John 3:1-8. Jesus Christ must come into us by the Spirit. All humans will live forever, but only those “born again” will live forever with the Lord. With His Spirit, we will still grow old, die, and go into the earth, but at death we [our souls] go up to be with the Lord and will return with Him to this earth and live forever. With being born again we still must wrestle against the old nature but will eventually win the final battle against sinning. Jesus Christ has made the way. Trusting ourselves into Him makes Him the Way for us.

30. What is your religion [devotion, dedication, object of worship]? Yes, I know that each of you is a Christian, but what is your religion? By that I mean, “What is your [perhaps only “current”] most precious thing?” What has been occupying your thinking lately? What is it that has been attracting your most frequent and earnest prayers? What do you fear losing? What have you been daydreaming about? Is it a person, an urge, a need, a possession? Whatever it is, it is messing with your worship of the Lord. An inordinate affection produces a progressive mis-focus, a growing alienation, a deficiency, an insidious anxiety.

I propose that scenario for a reason, which I’ll put in the form of another question: What is it that gives your life its meaning? It’s not that we should not enjoy things, but are those things our source of life? Do they define us? Do they give us our identity? Do we crater when we are threatened with their loss?

On a related matter, how do you know when to stop praying about something? For fullness, that question requires more than a short answer. But for now a short answer will leave us something to think about. My answer is, “Pray until you are confident that the Lord has said, ‘I have it in hand.’” After that, I may check in with Him from time to time, but mainly to praise Him for being actively in charge.

31. For me, it is often a difficult decision at times whether to press harder/faster, or to slow down/back off. It’s a matter of waiting on the Lord vs. self-responsibility. In either case, keeping my peace and trusting the Lord are the focus, more than which course [action or inaction] to take. It’s similar to Moses’ time when he was told to stop praying and get to work with what he had – Ex. 14:10-18. Thomas Watson [1874-1956], American, IBM corporate leader, waded into these waters by saying, “If you want to achieve excellence, you can get there today. As of this second, quit doing less-than-excellent work.” That displays a strong sense of self-responsibility.

32. This will be a general Thought, meant to position us for its true application or its non-application. If we are reasonably free to allow the Holy Spirit to apply it to us in whatever degree it is truthfully applicable to “me,” we will be blessed. Truth has that effect on disciples. Here ‘tis: If the Lord has raised us up [prepared, called, taught, and anointed] we will not experience burn-out. Fatigue, yes. Burn-out, no. Physical, intellectual, financial, spiritual battles take their toll on us in the flesh, even as Life flows abundantly into and through us. Since the Lord is with us, and we are responding in faith, nothing or no one can be [effective] against us – even though all sorts of temporal things may and will happen to us. The Thought is that we will not become weary of well-doing. No burn-out.

33. Parents [including spiritual parents of spiritual children], here is a powerful tool for child-raising. If you don’t tolerate unrighteousness in yourself, your children will not automatically tolerate it in themselves. If you do tolerate unrighteousness in yourself, your children will not only tolerate it in themselves but also embrace it. As the tree is bent, so it grows.

Nancy and I [mainly I] have had reflections on that in our own lives in regards to our adult children. We are convicted of its application in our family. It is not too late to make adjustments. Genuine repentance, love, openness, and a bit of wise, timely application of the truth will still bring righteous results among the trees that have already been bent and twisted. Jesus is our full-time and on-going Redeemer.

34. The Lord tells us to judge/appraise all things – 1 Cor. 2:15. I think that means things, people, times, events, etc. We children of the Eternal Father, having His Spirit within us, having biblically informed minds, and our hearts softened to Him, are to be an insightful, aware, clear-minded, and understanding people. As such we have a full-time and comfortable life while being circumspect. To help us do all of that righteously, John Wesley [1703-1791], English Anglican, Pentecostal, founder of the evangelical movement called Methodism, advised us to “be rigorous in judging ourselves and gracious in judging others.” Following his advice will cover a multitude of sins – ours and others.

35. We all started off with no knowledge, no self-control, no wisdom, no insightfulness, and no revelation. From there on we each have had our own trail to blaze or follow. When we were children, we spoke child-talk, we thought child-think, we reasoned with child-reasoning. We were dumb, incapable, poorly self-controlled, and certainly not attuned to the Lord. Then we grew up physically, most becoming at least legally self-responsible. Somewhere along there, many of us began to do away with childish thinking and acting. We gained some self-control and used it when appropriate, or when we needed to. We began to understand how things worked, and saw how to fit into life with others, if we wanted. Some of us came into a knowledge of God; some being drawn to that God in loving submission to Him. Then we purposely used our resources of knowledge and dedication to further His purposes. Self-control and focus became essential parts of our character. A biblically informed insightfulness slowly guided our knowledge and experience. Sound judgment came at about the time of wrinkles, dim vision, and grey hair. If we persisted with man and the Prince of Peace, insightfulness “just came,” being endorsed by heavenly revelations. Some of us actually show promise of making it through the entire process.

36. “One man’s treasure is another man’s junk,” goes the saying at the Antique Shop. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” is similar, especially among those who have been married over 50 years. Likewise, “One man’s revelation is another man’s conjecture.” Jesus reached back into the ancient writings and brought them into His teachings. Many did not see how they applied to their present circumstances, and reacted as spiritually blind religionists, accusing Him of abusing/misapplying Scripture. Paul had the same problem. Even Peter could not grasp some of Paul’s applications – 2 Pet. 3:14-16. Today the church still has difficulty understanding Paul’s applications, especially in his writings to the Roman church. [Not understanding is not a big problem; not living that which we do understand is a problem]

Yes, one man’s revelation is another’s conjecture. While it is true that written Scripture and the Holy Spirit’s whispers are not for solo interpretation [2 Pet. 1:19-21], such words must be believed for, received, and submitted to the mind of Christ among which we dwell.

37. The Lord always puts His people in the best position to do their part to change their world. When we are faithful to Him, we effect the called-for change and fulfill our commission, be it at home, at work, etc. When we are unfaithful, we squirm and sweat and try our best to get along with the world, eventually becoming like our world – thus failing in our commission.

Israel was at the center of the world’s superhighway exchange. Through it flowed the trade routes and warring armies of Europe, Asia, and Africa. That presented them, geographically, with the opportunity to bring the world to Jehovah, or to fail their appointment. Over time, they did both. Overall, Israel was not at all evangelistic. Quite the opposite, they were haughty and smug in their one true religion.

Have you noticed that we are often put in great [ugh!] positions in which we can change our world? The “ugh!” is there to reflect our immediate response to having to handle another trial. Then we remember that the Chinese call trials “dangerous opportunities” and we switch into 4-wheel drive. Right? The Master Architect always picks the perfect time and place. He brings people and situations to our door, and we become their answers. To be fully honest, sometimes we are as haughty and smug as our Israeli brothers, and turn down the dangerous opportunity. That’s not necessary.

38. “You can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future. … This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life.” – Steve Jobs [1955-2011], American entrepreneur. That approach to anything appears to be the opposite of “line upon line, precept upon precept” [Is. 28:10] but it does reflect the fast-acting leap of confidence that marks faith and shatters unbelief.

39. There is more than one position on this Thought, as there is to much of life, such as in Proverbs 26:4-5: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.” That is an example of there being more than one approach or position on a matter and that they do not contradict one another.

The Thought is that the end does not justify the process [means]. Truth is in the opposite, that the process justifies the end. The process is the end. But Jesus said something that at first reading sounds like He said the opposite: “Wisdom is justified by all her children” – Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35. At first reading that appears to say that whatever it takes, the end justifies the process [that whatever it takes to get good results is justified], but it really says that the eventual end results will justify the process [that the eventual truth will show that it was worth the cost]. Thin slices of bread still have two sides.

40. More and more frequently we are given the chance to stand instead of run or yield. A good example is a man named Eleazar in 2 Samuel 23:9-10. He, David, and 2 others stood their ground and fought the enemy when all the other men of Israel had given up the fight. Eleazar himself continued fighting “until his hand was weary and clung to his sword, and the Lord brought about a great victory that day.” Then those who had given up returned to the field of battle to claim some of the benefits of victory. Saints, there are some who will fight the good fight, and will win the victory that will benefit others. That’s called “standing in the gap.” If there are none who will stand in the gap of the broken down wall, the city will fall. There have been many cities that have fallen, but also many gaps filled.

41. Just as toleration of someone can be a [hopefully quick] step toward becoming brotherly, friendliness can be a quick step toward becoming hospitable. Toleration keeps us from running from crudeness or sinfulness in others until a life-giving relationship can be developed. Friendship may be described such as being nice to others, while we size them up [and arrange our souls and circumstances] for how we can invite them into our lives [hospitality].