THOUGHTS OF OCTOBER, 2016

Our leading Thought: In 1 Corinthians 1:9 do you see the Lord offering Christians fellowship with the Lord Jesus? Strange, isn’t it, that believers may not be already having fellowship with their Savior. But in that verse Paul and the Holy Spirit are making that offer to all of God’s children [born again Christians, saints, believers], not to unbelievers. [Unbelievers would first need to be born again, then they could hear that offer.] It is an offer to the whole family of God to come into fellowship with our Elder Brother, Jesus – to not stay somewhere off in the distance, in the family but isolated, perhaps fearful or uninformed or satisfied with only Family membership and their initial hot, soapy, cleansing shower.

That coordinates well with John’s offer for us to have fellowship with himself, other Christians, our heavenly Father, and with Jesus Christ – 1 John 1:3. As Paul said, we are offered the opportunity to know Jesus Christ our Savior, to which I will add “to know one another.” That “know” is defined as an intimacy beyond an original introduction. It is an intimacy that steadily reproduces Jesus’ character in the closer believer, more than or quicker than in the non-intimate believer.

2. False prophets have their own agenda. It may be for personal earthly gain or simply to cheer up the saints. In any case, they lead God’s people astray. They may mean to help the situation. They are nice, creative, see goodness, speak peace, and in general have a pleasant imagination. All of us like good news, especially if things are not going well. So, when trials are ahead, false prophets see pleasantries. Of course, some falsely proclaim doom, but their specialty is “God is pleased with us and will help us.” The tragedy is that if they would have stood before the Lord they would have had His words for His people and His people would have changed course and avoided trouble.

3. Jesus died on the cross for many reasons, one of which was to show us the way to die on our crosses. Another reason was so He would show the power of eternal [quality] and everlasting [quantity] life and believers would understand that we have the same. Even as the Son of God for 30 years He yet had to be anointed with the Holy Spirit and power before He began the work to which He had been assigned – Matt. 3:16-17, Acts 1:8; 10:38. Again, the same applies to believers. We are sent into the world exactly as He was sent – humans possessing body, soul, and human spirit; sons of God by virtue of receiving God’s Spirit, and awaiting the anointing power of the Holy Spirit before beginning our ministry.

4. Here’s a puzzler. In 2 Timothy 1:3 Paul says, according to several translations and paraphrases:

 KJV – “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.”

 NKJV – “I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day.”

 RSV – “I thank God whom I serve with a clear conscience, as did my fathers, when I remember you constantly in my prayers.”

 Phillips – “I thank the God of my forefathers, whom I serve with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers.”

 NEB – “I thank God – whom I, like my forefathers, worship with a pure intention – when I mention you in my prayers; this I do constantly night and day.”

 The Amplified Bible – “I thank God Whom I worship with a pure conscience [in the spirit of] my fathers, when without ceasing I remember you night and day in my prayers.”

 New Living Translation – “Timothy, I thank God for you. He is the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.”

I may be missing what is being said there by the Holy Spirit, but the puzzle for me is: 1) Did Paul’s ancestors [whom we will presume were religious leaders as was Paul/Saul himself] serve God with clear consciences? 2) If they did, did Paul/Saul also serve God with a clear conscience prior to his conversion on the road to Damascus? 3) Therefore, do well-intended, faithful Jews [non-Christians] serve God with clear consciences? 4) Do rank unbelievers who think they are doing the right thing [but are not] serve God with clear consciences? 5) Do atheists who think they are believing and doing the right thing serve God with clear consciences? Well, somewhere along that string of questions it seems that a line has been drawn.

5. Another question: Does the Lord stop all of His grace when we hold onto unforgiveness of someone, or does He stop only part of His grace? We know that He stops forgiving us when we do not forgive others. Can you imagine that your God would do that? He stops forgiving us when we don’t forgive others – Matt. 6:14-15. But what about other than the Lord not forgiving us – Matt. 18:35? What else does He do in regards to us when we do not forgive others? Who are the torturers and what do they do to us that is called torture? How do their tortures show in our lives? Does our flesh prevent our entrance into grace? I’m not sure that our image of God has allowed us to deal with these verses, and to see what effect our unforgiveness has had on us already. Is this a topic that our souls will allow us to pursue?

Nancy says that He responds in a way that He knows will be the best for us; that He will give us what we need. Yes, that is true, but it sounds a bit generic. He was specific when He said He would not forgive us when we do not forgive others. Can we be specific in our answer to the question: “What other grace may He withhold when we sin and do not repent, and what are the tortures that we endure, probably without knowing what is going on?” We are a people of the light, meaning that we are to live openly and in fellowship with the Lord and one another, that we are not to sin, we are not to hold onto sin, and that we should know what is going on in our lives and why.

6. Get ready for the end-of-year holidays. “Shana Tova” is Hebrew for “Happy New Year.” I have not been able to learn the Hebrew for “Merry Christmas.” It may be an impossible task.

7. Three things that assure us that we are not only born again but that we are worthy of the Lord Jesus: 1) We love Him more than we love our father or mother [how do we know that?], 2) We love Him more than we love our son or daughter [how do we know that?], and 3) “We have taken up our crosses and are following after Him [how do we know that?]. See Matthew 10:37-38.

Being willing to die is good; following through establishes the reality, from which there issues the flow of life and the hearing of “well done” and seed planted in good ground and personal rewards that Jesus wants for us even more than we want them.

We are not accustomed to thinking of being worthy of the Lord Jesus, but when the Lord brings up the topic we need to lay aside our tainted humility and engage with Him on His topic. Part of our being worthy of hearing Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your heavenly rewards,” is built upon our being worthy of Him while here in this earth-life. Take some time to go over this with Him. Perhaps add someone who knows you and who has proven the quality of their love by having offered you corrections from time to time.

8. There are the whispers from the Comforter of our souls [and then there are the luxuries offered by the comforter of the flesh].

A-A-Ah, God! [*A-A-AH, money!]*

A-A-Ah, the peace that God gives! [A-A-A-h, the peace that money gives!]

They fluctuate, don’t they. We need to depend on something or someone for peace, rest, and calm of life. At one time we may find our support in the Lord; at other times we may find it from money or stuff. We have great spiritual growth spurts but growth has plateaus, some of which can be permanent depending upon our ambient dangers. When our dangers are countered with money, we find a false peace. When we finally encounter a situation that money cannot defeat, we hear the Lord calling us back to Him.

A-A-Ah, the peace of God, the victory of Christ Jesus! *[Yet comes the whisper: “A-A-Ah, the peace of money! If I had only a bit more.”]*

Scripture does not teach that wealth is intrinsically evil. Wealthy Christians have exerted considerable influence [to say the least] on the development of monetary systems that helped millions escape poverty and to spread the gospel. That continues as our banking systems pass along wealth to those who would follow.

9. It is more than an individual situational priority, a choice – to either sit at Jesus’ feet listening to His word, or to get about the tasks that have been assigned us – Luke 10:39,42. Yes, some must cook, some must remain with the baggage [1 Sam. 30:21-24], some must go on to the fight, but when it is time to sit at the Master’s feet and be transformed, all other things become secondary. Some of those times are hard decisions [and they are meant to be], even costly ones, but they are worth the high tuition.

Common examples: Losing a day’s or a week’s pay to be with the saints, or the family, or at a Bible conference. Leaving the suburban life to join Jesus in the intercity or foreign missions.

10. I know that you have been following the tragic push regarding gender dysphoria. It’s sad enough for adults, but worse for the youth who are incapable of informed decisions and consent. The push can be found on the internet, in the gullible media, and worse, in gullible physicians. Body and mind-altering medications, plus counseling and surgery are destroying lives and bodies. This battle is part of the larger war that we have been going through in our assigned time here on the planet. Speak the truth, love the sinner. Don’t be quietened, speak, pay the price, don’t lose your peace. When you see yourself slipping, ask yourself, “If I don’t speak up, who will and what will he/she do?”

You have read the Book; we are more than victors through Jesus Christ who has already won the war and is now cheering us onward as we finish the mop-up. Communicate life, encourage one another. We have the internet and all it can do, which came on God’s schedule as did the Gutenberg Press of old. The Lord is working and coordinating all things according to His will. Centralized planning of social issues has never worked, but heaven’s centralized planning always works. God delivers. He is not into making us feel good while all goes to pot. He is reality. He is working through us to do things seen and unseen. He is yet restraining the evil one, but the time is near for us and the Restrainer to be removed. Shine.

11. Cambridge historian Lord Acton once said: “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” That is a well know quotation and it experiences little objection. Its value is in its warning, so that men can structure society to avoid absolute power in their leadership. However, his next sentence was, “Great men are almost always bad men.” That is also insightful. Its value is in its warning that leadership begins with character, not with education, demeanor, experience, conquests, or expertise.

12. “The secret of success is sincerity. Once you learn to fake that, you have it made.” – George Burns [1896-1996], American comedian, actor, singer, and writer, who had some remarkable insight into politics, did he not?

13. The Holy Spirit sure did match-up well with John for the living of his life and the writing of Scripture. Of course, He did that equally well with the other writers, and still does with us today. John’s focus, as far as I am concerned, was Jesus’ love for and among us. He penned that with great focus in John 3:16, nailed it through Jesus’ palms in 1 John 3:16, and nailed it through our palms in 1 John 3:17.

The quiet, internal, day-by-day working of faithful self-denial, and the resulting increase of Jesus in our innermost being is termed Life, spiritual-growth, the cross walk, abiding, and overcoming. That’s what we were made for, why we were called, what we are offered daily, and so is what He can accomplish in us.

Everyone who is reading this is still on the playing field; the clock is still running. No matter the opposition; no matter the score – we are poised for victory. Some may not have entered the game, others may have been bit players, and others played most of the game. But all have played our part. Trusting and yielding to the Coach will result in our names being engraved on the winner’s trophy.

14. To have the position of higher ground is essential in battle. It provides the best view of the battlefield and the best fighting position. You are at definite advantage in regards to your opponent. So, the Lord has “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” – Eph. 2:7. We now have two advantages over the enemy: 1) We see all from God’s view, from His point-of-view, and from His immediate and long range perspectives, including of the past, present and future, and 2) We have tactical advantage now, in the day of battle. What an advantage! We not only know that the victory is ours, but we have eyes to see the present battle and how we fit into the battle plan. Don’ give up the high ground. Everything is different from here.

15. Saints, the planet and its populations are coming apart. That means planet Earth and its humans and human organizations. At the same time, elements of the church are rising up quietly and steadily. The bulk of that which is called the church [and I don’t have any idea of any percentage here] is going down into unbelief, religiosity, and carnality. This is not the first time this has happened, but it is probably going to be the last time. We are part of an exciting time in all of creation, on the level of Noah’ flood, Israel’s exodus from Egypt, David’s kingdom, and Jesus’ visit 2,000 years ago. Don’t hunker in your bunker. There is lots of work to be done before the lights are turned off – haven’t you noticed them blinking?

Hints for the faithful: 1) Keep your peace, “fear not.” In those stressful and threatening situations, you bring the Prince of Peace into your situation by choosing peace and whatever actions may or may not come out of your peacefulness. 2) Live righteously, sons of God. Don’t be afraid to step into the gutter to rescue a fallen one. 3) Be what the Lord has called you to be. Exercise your gifts and callings so that the body can continue functioning as Christ. Even if you have not been walking in your calling and have not used your gifts, they are still there in you. The Lord does not take them back – Rom. 11:29. Dust some of the rust and dirt off, and walk in re-newness of life. There is a large army of saints who had given up on themselves or on the church, having stepped back into the shadows, but who are ready to come forward with powerful love and commitment. That time is now.

16. Our wilderness wanderings, whether for a few days or for years, are customized for us by the Lord. Exactly as He did for Moses and the Israelites, He takes us there and is with us, giving us all that we need to succeed in our barren places. Among all of that sand, heat and sky, with no real way to go back and in fear of going ahead, we are left to search for water, our basic need. In the most impossible of situations [and that is important] He provided us Himself, the Living Water. At that point our natural situation may not change, but we have changed. Our tap root has gone down deeper and found water. We then learn to live on that water daily despite the only thing we have around us is sand. When that has been established, and we are blossoming and bearing fruit in our wilderness, we are ready to be brought out into the place where we can be fruitful without taking credit for it.

With confidence, I can suggest that you look about you at saints who are growing in their deserts, some who are still searching for water, some who would rather go back to the old ways, and some who are already living by God’s grace in their promised land.

17. God’s truths are hidden from us. Hidden forever? Hidden until something happens in us to unlock the door to His treasure room? Might the key to that door be obedience to present revelation, or until we are humbled, or until we saints walk together in the light with Him into brighter light – 1 John 1:7? He definitely hides things from us – Matt. 11:25. If we saints had allowed Him to draw us closer together, as various parts of His body have been walking together with Him, what difference may that have made for us today? Faithful “what if” historical studies can be helpful when deciding the “what ifs” of today.

18. We are told to get our facts and affections straight in regards to who Jesus of Nazareth the Son of God was and is. As born again believers we have done so. We are also told to get our facts and affections straight in regards to who around us are Jesus of Nazareth’s sons of God brothers. As born again co-believers we are working on it. Questions:

 1) How do we recognize those brothers? Do they have a distinctive mark on their bodies or souls? Should we ask them and believe their answer? Is there a measure of how good or bad they must be?

 2) Is Romans 10:9 [“.. if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ..”], as written by Paul and the Holy Spirit, sufficient for us to accept them as brothers? Should it be sufficient for them to accept us as their brothers? Is that acceptance going on among us, or are there other qualifications?

 3) Must they bear fruit, and sufficient and consistent amount of fruit, before I recognize them as my brothers? Do I use the test for false prophets as a test of eternal brotherhood – Matt. 7:15-20? Why? Are “they” using the same test on me? Why?

 4) Must they bear specific fruit, and sufficient and consistent amount of specific fruit, before I recognize them as my brothers? Do I use the test for believers walking in the Spirit as a test of eternal brotherhood – Gal. 5:16-26? Why? Are “they” using the same test on me? Why?

 5) Must they understand certain aspects of the gospel as I understand them, or at least the most important ones to me, or the majority of Christian doctrines as I understand them? Do I allow “them” to judge me by their standards as I judge them by my standards? Why or why not?

Let’s take a break from wall-building. The question has to do with, “Who is my eternal brother in Christ?” A specialist in God’s word asked that question of Jesus, but asked “who is my neighbor” instead of “who is my brother” – Luke 10:25-37. For the purpose of answering my question, “neighbor” and “brother” are interchangeable, because Jesus’ answer was, “You will never know until you are neighborly/brotherly.” That’s the key to understanding who is my eternal brother. If I have the eternal quality of brotherhood in my soul I will have a positive reception of those whose confession is that Jesus was raised from the dead and is Lord – again, Rom. 10:9. If I have an additional filter through which I sift their confession, I stand before him as that scribe, as the priest and the Levite in Jesus’ parable, as a Pharisee. I would twist God’s word just a bit here and there to make Him not my eternal brother, even though he has been selected by the Lord and born again of the Spirit.

This is the time to knock down our self-imposed walls. Here are some wonderful words for us to relax into so we can enjoy our family and encourage them to press on in Jesus: Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8; Acts 16:31; Rom. 14:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11, 24.

19. On July 11, 1969 the Lord spoke to four of us during morning prayers and Bible sharing in the Sierra Madres of the South, in Southern Mexico, that a life of discipleship is a life that receives good things from Him for the sake of others. The topic that morning was about patience, mercy and steadfastness, but we knew that the part about receiving for others was a much broader truth about all of Life and all things. We four were Carol Fields [later Kennedy], Carolyn Shaver, Nancy [my wife], and me.

20. Solutions to poverty almost always exist in that very society. Those solutions are intact families, churches, and unencumbered enterprises, all of which speak of ingenuity and cooperation. Subsidizing those in poverty is a temporary helpfulness but not a solution. Temporary helpfulness, if prolonged, leads to decay of those existing assets. Poverty is not a material problem to be solved by material means, as is shown by the satellite and cable TVs of families on government subsidies. Our federal government’s war to end poverty has not learned from over 50 years of failure. Although material poverty has slightly improved, the poverty of dependency and a lack of hope have taken over large segments of us. The only guarantee of a lasting escape from the poverty trap is in our families, our churches, and freedom of enterprise.

21. The Lord fed Adam and Eve from the tree of life, but forbad their eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so He forbad their eating from the tree of life. He knew the Way of Life was best, but they wanted to know all the facts and to make their own decisions about what was good or bad, and to decide their direction. Accepting God’s ways and trusting Him in those ways was not their “cup of tea.” Now, believers in Jesus Christ have both ways open to us; we can walk in the ways of the flesh or in the Spirit. His followers desire and increasingly choose the way of the Spirit, which means that we choose that which Adam lost.

What is the tree of life, and what is its fruit? The tree of life is the cross. Jesus chose that tree, and the fruit it bore for Him was/is everlasting life, righteousness for Him and for others who trust in Him. When we choose our tree of life, we bear the fruit of righteousness and eat of it ourselves, leaving plenty for others. Like our Great Shepherd, we lay down our lives in order to be sheep food for those who follow. Fruitfulness and Life come from death to self. Jesus’ and our crosses produce a forest of life. As in Jesus’ life, we must embrace our crosses, not slop along casually, selecting the easy way.

22. Why are you a Christian? I mean, what makes you a Christian? Is it because you have decided to use the Bible as your textbook of life? Is it because you have become adequately successful in following Jesus’ teachings? No and No. You are a Christian because Jesus Christ is your life. You are no longer alive there in your body. It is Jesus who is within you, giving you life. The old you is dead, exactly like the Bible says. Yes, the old you has died. That is not figuratively speaking.

As a Christian, the old you is now dead and you have a new person in you. That means you have experienced an exchange of spirits. It is spirit that gives us life/livingness. A believer’s human spirit has been replaced by God’s Spirit. That is a done deal! Yes, your body is still there, and your soul is still there. Your body may have been impacted by some sort of physical change when you were born again/reborn, and your soul was most certainly impacted. Before we were born again our soul had been patterned after the nature of Satan, our ex-father, like Adam’s had, and must be re-patterned now after our heavenly Father. That process will continue until we leave this earth-life and go home to the Lord. A large part of that process involves learning to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, which means learning to choose Him, follow Him, listen to Him, and obey Him.

The further we go with Him, the more obvious it is that He is our life. The soul’s “old me” habits diminish daily and the Lord’s life increases daily. Why would any believer resist that?!

23. Have you thought about the faithfulness of those mentioned in Hebrews 11, the Hall of Fame of the faithful ones? Every example is especially blessed by being placed in print for us to admire. Have you considered the first one on the list? He has the most faith of any others on the list. It is God Himself, in verse three. He had the faith to believe that His imaginations, and putting them into words, would be creative. So, out of the invisible [although in faith He saw the finished product before it existed temporally] He created the visible. That’s a great example. No wonder He was Number One on the list.

24. Samson was a moral failure, chosen by the Lord to deliver His people. Might the Lord do that again? There is hope this political season in America that the Lord will. Our hope is in the Lord, who made and runs heaven and earth, and who raises up and brings down empires, often using the unlikely. Fortunately, it is not [only] by might, nor by power, nor by moral perfection that He does wonderful things.

Why did the Philistines finally give up trying to defeat Samson, and turn to Delilah for help? Answer: They perceived that the source of Samson’s power was from a supernatural source. No matter how strong his body was, it was not within Samson’s human power to do the things he did. What were those things? See Judges 14:6, 19; 15:4, 15; 16:3, 30. It has been said that those doors of the city gate, with the two posts and bars, weighed 4 tons, and that the mountain climb was 36 miles uphill. Those Philistines were looking for the supernatural source of Sampson’s power. Are we looking?

25. Where to direct your giving and how much to give are good problems to have, and they become even better problems the more we desire to be led by the Holy Spirit, versus the goodness of our flesh, when those two diverge. Scripture like, “If a man will not work, don’t feed him” seem to conflict with, “Give to those who ask.” So, we look into Jesus’ life and words for help.

One of our problems seems to be that we want to know where to cut-off our giving, instead of where to extend the flow of our generosity. It’s an attitude problem. We are aware of the instructions to love the Lord with everything we are and have, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, and so with the “where and when shall I stop giving” attitude we arrive at an impasse. Jesus told the man who asked, “Who is my neighbor” that he would never know the answer to that question until he became neighborly. In the matter of giving and living generously, we will never know where and when to give until we are generous and neighborly in our souls. Then we won’t ask that question. Then we will more comfortably, confidently and fully live 1 John 3:17.

26. Along the line of the previous Thought, charitable groups formed through free associations, such as is the church, are very likely to have results that promote successful lives. Forced and governmental associations are less likely to have results that can be called successful lives. The more government and distant control, the less successful living is produced. The closer the headship is to the needy, the more successful living is produced. It is very fortunate that the Lord’s work is based on His personal headship relationship with us and with those to whom He sends us. But where His relationship with those we serve is changed to the church’s personal relationship to those people, the less lives are transformed, the more money is spent on projects, and the less success the gospel produces.

27. A Teacher’s Notes on perseverance – Jacob’s, Jesus’, and ours

Usable definitions for this lesson:

1] Persist – to continue.

2] Persevere – to continue in the face of strong opposition.

The continuance may be for hours, days, years, or a lifetime. It may begin suddenly, or you may see it coming and prepare yourself for it. In this study, you will have the opportunity to examine your life for the strength of your perseverance.

Nothing of our national character has been more weakened over the generations as that of our ability to persevere. Our forbearers persevered on the Atlantic Coast after they arrived from Europe, their descendants persevered on their westward migration, they persevered while setting up our new nation, and they persevered as recently as World War II until the enemy surrendered unconditionally, and we rebuilt them. In present generations we don’t win our wars, including our internal ones against poverty or perversion or discord or other forms of unrighteousness. Mainly, as Laodiceans, we tire of persevering and decide to return to our pleasantries and leisures.

So, persevere when it is easy [don’t slack off]. Persevere after it is accomplished [to sustain victory]. Persevere when it is painful, difficult, costly, and when you are losing [because it is not yet the end]. Persevere when you have been abandoned and are on your own [because we are not]. Persevere when you are immersed in disaster [because the end is in sight].

Jacob persevered. See Genesis chapters 27 through 35, especially 32. From his birth, he had the name “Cheat.” His mother called him Cheat; his father called him Cheat; his playmates and the hired hands called him Cheat; his older brother called him Cheat. It could be said that his name crippled him from his youth, so his life was not easy. All of us had at least some similar problems. Not surprisingly, Jacob fulfilled that which was his name; he became a cheat. He cheated his brother Esau [who had not cheated him]; he cheated his father Isaac [who had not cheated him]; he cheated his father-in-law Laban [who had greatly cheated him]; and he cheated God [who never cheats].

But when it was crunch-time, and Jacob was about to get what his cheating-self deserved, he got alone with the Lord and did not break-off contact until he had been given another name and the new character to go with it. All night [his and our darkest hours] the two wrestled, part of the time with Jacob in great pain due to the Lord having dislocated his hip, but Jacob did not stop despite [listen here to Jacob’s testimony!] the God-inflicted pain and the long hours of their wrestling. He was fearful, self-centered, and was in turmoil in his heart, but he persevered until God’s blessing was received. He had persevered unrighteously and righteously with God and with man, and finally had prevailed with God. That prepared him to prevail with man. He had received God’s grace; he was humbled in his soul and was weakened in his flesh [which helped].

Some lessons to be learned from Jacob: 1) The higher the calling, the longer and more difficult the preparation time. 2) The greater the promise, the more tenacity required in our perseverance. 3) The bigger blessings are directly proportional to the degree of difficulty in attaining. 4) Do not quit, no matter how long you have waited, how painful it has been, or what mistakes you have made along the way. 5) Trust the Lord’s love and wisdom enough to be assured that He will never allow you to be defeated [in your flesh, yes; but not in the you, the eternal inner man]. If you are defeated, you have chosen to be defeated.

The sum of it all: No matter how dark and despairing things appear, stay with the Lord and His plan. Don’t expect to be treated differently [especially, better] in this world than was Jesus – by the world or by God. Neither pain, failure, weariness, our mistakes, and our sense of unworthiness – nothing can separate us from God’s wonderful results when we persevere with Him. If something within us has to die, or be dislocated like was Jacob’s hip, in order to fulfill our [daily or long-term] purpose, then let it die or be “dislocated.”

We do earn some things from the Lord, but don’t get too involved with having to be adequately righteous before we can expect the Lord’s evidential presence. His love always overrides our unrighteousnesses.

Testimonies: 1) Jesus on the cross, forsaken by His Father, yet persevering. 2) The recurrent thoughts of my failures [all long ago forgiven] -- handling them, persevering, God’s results of turning them to good. 3) Our present ongoing assignments – stopping, changing, or continuing is the question.

Next week’s lesson: When to lay it down, to stop persevering, as in John 10:18.

[Note to THOUGHTS readers: If you want a great little blessing, Google the song, “Keep on Walking.”]

God’s blessings