THOUGHTS OF OCTOBER, 2017

1. Why did the Lord give His people the law? Answer: So that they would sin more, and thus more obviously, and thus turn to Him more intensely – Rom. 5:20. There was sin before the law, beginning with Adam, Eve, Cain, et. al., but there was always an out, that God had not informed them of sin and what it was so that they could avoid it if they so desired. With the law came the undeniable knowledge of sin, which caused some to repent and others to spit in God’s face. In either case, now there was no excuse, and man’s sin nature and our subjection to it was revealed. The evil ones desired sin; the righteous ones [those who desired to not sin] saw that they were trapped in their sin nature. What could the righteous do? The Lord gave them a temporary way [swept under the rug, so to speak] to put their sins behind them [repentance and animal sacrifice], but nothing to avoid their future sinnings. They were in a hard place. What could humanity do? Nothing. Then came Jesus.

In that process did you notice that the Lord did not punish humanity because of our sin nature? We were not punished for having our human nature, but for sinning. Our sin nature said, “I have to be me.” It said that I want to be my own god. At that point we may not have been committing sins [doing sinnings] but we were not pursuing the One who created us and not submitting to His godship. Our good works had been exemplary but they were disobediences because we were living for ourselves. That is man’s sinful nature, the nature that Jesus Christ came to kill. He died on His cross to redeem us from that nature through faith in Him, to empower us by His indwelling Spirit to not sin, and to make permanent forgiveness of our sins available to us through that same faith.

1. What to do about that brother or sister who backslides and comes back, over and over? They have had a wonderful work of the Lord in their souls, which shows at times, and they never deny it. Yet, they do not show the power that avoids sinning, to gradually and steadily grow spiritually, that being possessed by the Holy Spirit ordinarily works in believers. I have had close, ongoing relationships with loved ones for years whose lives showed a high degree and frequency of “stagger” in the Spirit. I have little to say about their situation, but know enough about godliness to be confident of my response, that I am to persist in loving them [fellowship and trust helps].

In Romans 14 the Lord tells us He loves them and to mind our business of loving them while He leads us all onward together. By no means do I want to be one who hinders their returns to righteousness, but I don’t know what to do to prevent their falling again. Jesus’ love in and through me covers a multitude of my, and hopefully their, failings. We are to receive and watch over the weak in faith. So, I know the basics, but not the solution. That’s another example of my not being a one-man answer to everyone’s problems. Those wobbly-walking ones are dearly beloveds of the Lord, and thankfully, of mine. Luke 15:22-24 is encouraging.

1. Work is not the only way we make ourselves valuable to others. The other way is by being ourselves in others’ lives. Our usefulness is not just in being productive in the workforce. For example, loving wives and kids are a powerful motivation for dads as dads are away from home going about their workday.

But work certainly is profitable for those who do the work, for those who pay us for working for them, and for those who appreciate and need the finished product. Working together, and the finished products of our joint labors, show the results of fellowship, cooperation, and orderliness. The business and manufacturing world knows this, and benefits. Those who do not produce good products are often noted for less fellowship, cooperation, and orderliness. What a loss when we do not see the need for those qualities!

1. The Lord has made known to us some of His secret plans, far beyond that which many of us appreciate. By His kind intentions toward us [WOW!], in His infallibility, He has laid out the fullness of our future. When all things in heaven and on earth have been subdued to Christ Jesus and put in perfect order, we will find ourselves properly fitted into our preplanned position and function. That is our inheritance, which means that when He brought us into His family He reserved His goodness for us in its fullness. All that will have come before then, will be clearly seen to have been the workings of His will. That we will be there with Him, and in that situation, will be in itself praise to Him. That’s Ephesians 1:9-12.
2. In some of our prayers for help [I would suppose in those not answered] we may be asking the Lord to do what He cannot do. He cannot do what He says He will not do. He exalts His word above all else of Himself, including some of the answers to our prayers – Ps. 138:2 KJV. If He says He will answer our prayers when we are abiding in Him, then not abiding in Him removes that promise from us. If He says we need to repent before He will act on our behalf, then not repenting removes us from His acting on our behalf. Scripture bears out the truth of this Thought. The Lord will not lie. He will not violate His word. There are times when unanswered prayer is the Lord fulfilling His word to us.

As the Lord’s obedient children, we also have self-imposed limitations on our responding to others’ needs, do we not?

1. Which bothers you most, your sin or your sins? Those born again of the Spirit are free from bondage to sin, meaning we are free from having to sin, that we do not need to sin any more. We are free. Being then alive to the Lord, we count ourselves dead [by faith, by believing] to the demands and desires of the old, pre-born-again self that was subject to sin.

If we don’t believe that, of course that which comes about only by faith will not come about. Our old habits need to be changed by our having faith in God’s word concerning us, so we can and will live outwardly the eternal truth that is within us. Jesus came to take away our being bound to sin, gave us His Holy Spirit, and is now working with us to be strengthened by faith in His Spirit within us.

1. One reason that some have more than others is for the benefit of others, many of whom have less than we have. The less may be in the area of intelligence, money, physical ability, etc. However, those who have less have no claim to that which others have. Compare: One reason the Lord has more of everything than we have is to benefit us, but we have no claim to that which He has. He relates to us in His grace, and so are we to relate to others in our grace.
2. In Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23 the Lord speaks of the power of His word to multiply the believer’s fruitfulness up to the multiple of 100. That is a powerful statement but in those verses the promised results of “fruitfulness” are left nonspecific. That’s good and true, but still nonspecific. Then in Matthew 19:29 He says: “And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive [here one early manuscript reads ‘a hundred times’ -- ed.] many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.” That statement is very specific, is it not? It says that we will receive much more of specific things than we had before we give it up because of Him. I write this Thought to testify to the absolute truthfulness of those words, to their fulfillment in my life, with much more to come in this earthlife and in the ages to come. But don’t hoard God’s grace.
3. This is a copy of the study notes of a recent Bible Study in our home. We meet at 7:00 PM every Saturday evening. Call or e-mail before coming.

We will be using the Amplified Bible. See Psalm 27:7-14 on how the Lord makes His way into and through a believer’s [God-designed] situation and brings it to fruition. Verses 1-6 are to prepare our hearts for verses 7-14, so read those verses to yourself first. They are priceless.

“But what about those situations that are not God-designed?” Good question because there are none. There is no such thing as “not God-designed.” We may get to that later in Ephesians 1:1 🡪 2:10.

Ps. 27:7-9 – The first step for us to take as the Lord gains our attention and makes His way into our situations is calling out to or turning to Him, often when He is our only recourse, or our only righteous recourse, and at all other times. “Be gracious to me and answer me” does not mean “do what I want.” It means for the Lord to show Himself, His “face,” to confirm His presence with us in regards to the situation, because we want to submit to His direction. Notice in v. 8 that David 1) was approaching the Lord the way the Lord told His people to approach Him, and 2) was not telling God what to do about David’s problem. For a great picture of that quality of prayer, read Acts 4:23-31 where the saints told the Lord about the tough situation they were in, then told Him they were depending upon Him to handle the puny human and spiritual opposition because they were charging ahead “despite the torpedoes.” Compare your prayers in that way to David’s and to those gathered there with Peter and John.

v. 10 – Second step, separation [actively (meaning we do it) and passively (meaning others do it)] from hinderances in our lives, meaning from people, places and things. Cpr. Jesus in Mark 3:21, 31-35. Lots of testimony is available tonight in this room in this respect.

v. 11 – Third step, discipleship. Correction of our thoughts and ways, then firm realignment to prevent future missteps. There are many things the Lord will not do, and some things the Lord cannot do. For example, He will not and cannot do that which He has said He will not do, and He will not and cannot do that which He said He will do only if we do something first [abide in Him/don’t abide in a bad situation, repent of evil/don’t repent of an obedience, go/don’t go, give/don’t give, receive/don’t receive, etc.].

Clarifying “not repenting of an obedience” -- don’t repent when you were obeying the Lord and something went “wrong” or turned “bad.” Don’t repent of doing something that was done in obedience. A “bad” result does not mean you disobeyed the Lord. For one thing, all of us need some failures to help subdue our pride and promote humility. That is one way our Father minimizes us – ask Moses, David, Peter, and any spiritually healthy and insightful believer.

v. 12 – Fourth step, testing. Teachings need to be followed with testings in order for the righteous word to be firmly embedded in our souls, not only understood and accepted in our intellects. Some saints are willing to learn, but not willing to endure the application of their learning. See Luke 8:13. And see Hebrews 6:3-8 which speaks of the turning away from the Lord of those who later want to return to Him but cannot because they want to come back with their apostate ways. They cannot find their way back because they will not forsake their waywardness.

v. 13 – Fifth step, testimony. This verse is an exclamatory statement!!! David says: “What a disaster I would have been if I had not believed that I would see the Lord’s goodness in this life!” That is not really a testimony of initial salvation, but is a believer’s testimony of our life’s walk, and is common among us. Q: Where is “the land of the living?” A: Here and now on the earth in our lifetime – per many scriptures.

v. 14 – Sixth step, comfort others by your life and words testimony. Waiting, hoping and expecting the Lord to come through does require and does produce bravery and courage.

Now it would be good to read Ephesians 1:1 through 2:10, especially in the Amplified Bible, to strengthen our knowledge and faith in the Lord’s lordship in all ways and things and times. He is The Lord! Take Mary’s advice: “Whatever He says to you, do it” – John 2:5.

1. The Lord answers our prayers several ways: He provides, He delays providing, and He says “No” to providing for us. Mature saints are not comforted by reason of always having their prayers answered immediately. Only within the arms of His constant love and infinite wisdom do we find ourselves comfortable all the days of our lives.

In John 6:5-6 Jesus set up a situation to show us one of God’s ways to provide for those who follow Him. In verse 6, even as a man, the Son of God knew what He would do next. He would set up the situation and have His disciples do ridiculous things so that He could show the glory of God. If they would not trust Him enough to do those things, they would not see God’s glory.

For us in those cases, He may whisper in our ears, “You did well, but I, only Myself, will be the answer to this need” – 2 Cor. 12:7-10. Yes, sometimes He provides, sometimes He delays, and sometimes “only” He, Himself, is our provision. He is dealing with us on the stage of eternity. Trust Him. There is never a non-answer.

So, what do we do during the delays that may end up being “No” or “Yes, but wait?” One answer is that the Lord has not responded “yet” – Heb. 2:8-9. Things may even get worse before He shows His hand. While we wait for His temporal results [the final results being reserved for the hereafter] it does not look like “all things” are being submitted to Him. But the results are “in the bank,” laid up for greater purpose in the heavenlies. Our seeing of the fullness of things is yet ahead, and we will be pleased.

It helps if we will remember that all things are in the process of being brought into submission to Christ, are being minimized as He is being maximized. The diminishing includes us – the old man, our flesh. The whole of creation is groaning and moaning and resisting the process – Rom. 8:18-25. The impossible is right on schedule.

1. This Thought is basic. I see and hear saints, including Bible teachers, getting it wrong all the time. Jesus said, “All authority/power has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” That’s “all,” and “everywhere” in creation. After quoting Jesus saying that, they go into changing what He said, without knowing that what they are saying is contrary to their quote.

What they say next is something like, “The only ‘legitimate’ power in the universe belongs to the Lord Jesus. All ‘other’ power is either illegitimate or temporal.” But scripture says that all of the power belongs to Jesus, so none can belong to anyone else. The obvious problem is that they do not grasp the total lordship of Christ and His ownership and sole use of His all power/authority. The Gospel of Job is a great help. Job knew that the Lord’s love, power, presence, purpose, and wisdom were at work in his life during the good, the bad, and the ugly times, so he could say that even if the Lord killed him, he would trust Him – Job 13:15.

The story of Joseph being sold into slavery, then being elevated in Egypt to second only to Pharaoh, is another clear and powerful testimony to the Lord’s all-mightiness. God did it that way because He had multiple good sub-purposes in mind. Just because we cannot see with our eyes minute by minute that He is working all things to His purpose, we tend to fall into unbelief and begin to re-write scripture. But no matter how far removed from our vision of God’s workings things get, the truth stands. This is the time, now in this earthlife, when we get credit for seeing all things and living by the eyes of faith [while at the same time seeing the natural by our natural eyes and understandings]. The day is coming when we will share His eternal panorama, when the eyes of faith without natural evidence will no longer be needed. Make the most now of that spiritual quality called faith, which greatly pleases the Lord and greatly changes our personal circumstances in the hereafter.

Until we are grasped by that truth, we imagine ourselves at the mercy of a powerful devil and a not-always-more-powerful God who is playing catch-up. We imagine that things, at least some things, get out of His hand, and that the Lord has to devise some response to that which the devil himself first devised and has begun to carry out. The Lord is the Lord always, in every situation, continually. He is the Master Architect. We need to get His higher perspective on life, even when getting it leaves us without all the answers intellectually. That’s as it should be.

1. “Statistics don’t lie, but statisticians do” is a well-known and sometimes accurate quote. However, I believe the following statistics are reasonably accurate. The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than $1.90 per person per day. Around 1970, economic growth in the world, especially in China and India, began lifting millions out of abject poverty. The number of poor people decreased while the number of non-poor increased.

The stats: In 1970 there were 2.2 billion living in extreme poverty. In 2015 there were only 7.50 million living in extreme poverty. For perspective, that means that twice the number of our U. S. population are still in extreme poverty out there in the world. On the other hand, the reasons for that improvement are multiple. I would hope that united efforts to improve the health and nutrition and self-help and governments of the poor are bringing these results, and that diseases and genocide are minimally responsible [through death].

1. Kids [of all ages] want to be happy. That includes me. But, parents, don’t teach your kids to be happy. Instead, teach them to be godly. When they focus their souls on being godly, they will be aiming for something that will satisfy them, and they will be happy. This Thought could become someone’s thesis.
2. How is this for a paraphrase of Hebrews 4:2? “The good news given to humanity by the Lord are precious words which anyone can accept for guidance in all matters, but without faith they are only that, precious words for guidance. When they are spoken to born again believers by the Holy Spirit they are life-changing and keep us on our crosses daily.”
3. Abraham passed-off Sarah as his sister and gave her to Pharaoh because he was afraid Pharaoh would kill him to possess her if Pharaoh knew she was his wife. That revealed Abraham’s fear, susceptibility to lying, self-centeredness, etc. Throughout scripture the Lord elevates Abraham for us to follow his life-examples. But, why did the Lord show us Abraham’s deficiencies? Today’s answers to that question: 1) To encourage us fainthearted sinners when we see that righteous leaders also fail, and 2) to correct us wrongheaded sinners when we are glad that righteous leaders also fail.
4. This Thought comes with the title of, “Where are you in God’s GPS?” In other words, where are you now in regards to living in God’s Present Supply of His spiritual and temporal availables?” We can start by saying, “Not where I used to be, and not where I’m going to be,” meaning that we are somewhere on the way, growing daily in our walk with the Lord. And, despite our ups and downs, our abidings and nonabidings, we are confident in the Lord’s covenant of His enduring love and abiding presence.

So, what else should we know, especially about His functional activities on our behalf? He has told us that there are variables to how He will function in our lives. If we abide in His word and if His word abides in us, He will answer our prayers. His love and presence are unchangeable, but we are weak or impotent when we do not abide in Him. The same goes for His command for us to forgive those who sin against us. Are the promises of His answers to prayer then still applicable? No; when we fail to forgive others, our prayers are not answered. That raises the question of “Where are we in the matter of God’s Present Supply? Do we know where we are spiritually with Him? What is and is not available due to the variables in our walk with the Lord?

Paul had what he called “a thorn in my flesh.” Of course he prayed for its removal, but eventually he heard the Lord say that it was not going to be removed, that God’s grace would be sufficient for Paul to live with and endure it. That apparently settled it for Paul, and he stopped praying about it. Paul knew what the Lord could do, but then he knew that the provision of his healing had been taken off the table. Paul’s prayers for his healing had been against God’s will.

King Zedekiah sought deliverance of God’s people from the enemy. God’s word through Jeremiah was that they were in no spiritual condition to defeat the enemy, and that the Lord was not going to intervene in order to defeat them for His people. Zedekiah and Jeremiah [God’s word speaker] knew what the Lord could do, had done before, and would do again some day, but found that their God was not going to do it “today.” God’s people were not in position with the Lord to receive the promises they desired, but were in position to receive the promises of His chastisements, and then restoration.

The message was and is that God’s people should submit to their enemy’s yoke, and that in due time He would bring them out of their bondage. The Lord never left them. He will never leave us. He was always with them and was working out their destiny in Him. So, He is with us. It is good when we know where we are in the Lord, what is and is not available to us, based on our current and recent abiding in Him and His word. That’s what Jesus taught the disciples in Luke 14:31-32. We should listen.

For example: The Lord heals all sorts of diseases and injuries by miraculous means, meaning other than medically or surgically. Old Testament records, New Testament records, and for these 2,000 years of the church age He has continued to heal by miraculous means. But He has given us surgery and medicines and medically educated people to do the healing when, for whatever many reasons, He does not heal miraculously. Every time there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, one of its characteristics is miraculous healings. I have seen them, and written about them. Thousands have been documented and are still occurring. When our prayers for healing are not heard, medical and surgical healings are available, but they are not equivalent to the impact and fullness of miraculous healings. Until the Lord brings us into the fullness of His promises, we are thankful and content to take His healings in the medical-surgical ways, if possible. That’s where we are in God’s GPS.

The short-cut from not abiding to abiding is found in repentance. Spiritual sensitivity, humility, and repentance are powerful realities. As the church has fallen into the hands of the church [meaning out of Jesus’ hands], and things such as temporal prosperity has weakened us of those three realities, we are in submission to the yoke. In the Lord’s time and by His ways He will bring us out of our bondage. The time is coming when again He will heal all of our diseases, and prevent them. Until then, He will never leave us. We should remember.

1. “It is a glorious thing to be a prisoner of the Lord, for in our bonds we find liberty. In our weakness we find strength. In our foolishness we find wisdom. In our poverty we find prosperity. By losing everything we find everything. By giving up all things we inherit everything. By accepting the sentence of death we find the Life of the Lord. Let us stretch forth our hands and allow Him to dress us and lead us where He wishes us to go, in the way we would not choose for ourselves, for that is the Narrow Way, and it is the path of blessing, though it be disguised.” Thank you, C. B. Every phrase in those six lines is wonderfully biblical. And every phrase has been provided living proof through the lives of Jesus’ disciples over the 2,000 years of His faith-kingdom on earth.
2. When humanity walked in darkness, at least the aspect of darkness that denied the existence of God the Creator, we had no excuse for such unbelief. The evidence of Himself and His power and His nature were present and obvious from the beginning of creation – Rom. 1:18-20. Sufficient was and is that revelation of Himself.

When Jesus was revealed to humanity, we got an atomic blast-type and amount of revelation. It was of such clarity and impact that those who turn down His offer of faith in Him are doomed to hell forever. Great was and is His revelation.

None of those evidences have faded, but instead have been clarified and multiplied as more of cosmic space has been revealed. Microscopic matter such as genes and chromosomes, and submicroscopic matter such as quarks and leptons have been discovered. The further we go, the more of God’s glory is being revealed to us, thus the less excuse we have for not responding to those revelations of His attributes, power and nature. The more we look into creation, the easier it is to believe that there is a powerful and wise Creator who has designed everything with purposeful intent and order. That Creator even gave us a handbook, the Bible, to enhance our understanding of Him and His creation.

The revelation of Jesus Christ remains the prime revelation of all and anything of God, mainly because He was and is God Himself. But let’s not trash the goodness of God’s creation as a revelation of His nature and power. He had us in mind when He provided it.