THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2017

1. Anyone can pray, can pray to whomever he wants to pray, can pray in whatever condition of soul he finds himself, and in whatever relationship he has or does not have with the one he prays to. That sentence allows for a lot of messed up praying situations, and some good ones, so I’m not saying that the prayers of all who pray will be effective. That sentence is to set up a scenario for prayer that is offered to believer-followers of Jesus Christ.

Jesus prayed from a place of confidence, righteousness, and relationship. He lived in that place, which we will call victory. Thus, His prayers were answered. No one else can claim that same place, except through faith in Him and His victory. In order for us to be established in that same place, He has given us instructions to follow Him daily through bearing our own crosses. The trail we leave while bearing our crosses demonstrates His victory in the battles of our everyday lives. Our crosswalk shows the truth, that He has won the victory, and that He applies it to our lives. It shows that we are fighting from His victory, not for our victory.

From another perspective, we are not fighting at all. We are standing in victory while we go through life’s events in His victory. The instructions of “stand therefore” are from the Victor who has given us the victory – Eph. 6:14.

Think on this: God is not human-centered; He is Christ-centered. That’s why He tells us to be Christ-centered. When Jesus was here, His Father was Christ-Centered and Jesus was Father-centered. Believers are now in Christ, so we are given instructions to construct our thoughts and actions from within Him. Because Jesus was not human-centered, but Father-centered, He was victorious and is now residing in victory. He invites us and enables us to live in Him. Our doing otherwise puts us to some degree out of alignment with The Way. When we are out of alignment, things just don’t work the ways of Jesus. The mal-aligned ways may seem fairly good according to our human judgment and experience, but they are not. Compare them to Jesus in Scripture, which is our only means of knowing The Way, to becoming aligned, to getting on The Way.

1. It has been mentioned many times that the less righteousness we have and the less personal responsibility we take for ourselves and for others, the more civil government grows, removing our freedom and ruling more intricately in our lives. When we look to God for His being the Lord of all, civil government diminishes. The more we self-govern, the less civil government we need. In short, civil government increases when righteousness decreases in the people. The unfortunate thing is that when righteousness decreases in the people, it also decreases in the increasing civil government.

Isaiah [9:7] told us that in the Messiah’s earthly kingdom, His government would increase continually and, by the way, peace also would never be broken. It looks like that will be a time of big but perfect government, folks. That’s another example of doing [what is thought to be] the wrong thing the right way, but the right Man will be doing it. One of the keys to His success in civil government is that He establishes His reign first in the hearts of His citizens. In fact, that may be the major increase of His government, or the only area of increase.

People being conformed to Jesus’ image is a powerful tool for forming a social contract. Eventually, in the millennium [and perhaps some work will be required thereafter?], believers will be conformed to the image of Christ Jesus. Because He is accustomed to getting along with Himself, so will we get along with each other. Eventually every person will bow his knee to Jesus and admit that He is Lord and King.

1. We were saved from hell and are headed for heaven. Wonderful! Yet, that’s such a small representation of the full truth. It being God’s plan from before the beginning [before Gen. 1:1] to create humans who by His grace would eventually become like His soon-coming-to-earth Son, Jesus, and to not stop working on us until His impossible task was accomplished in us. Until then, each believer finds ourself an as-yet unfinished product. But our Father will answer our Elder Brother’s prayer, that we be one exactly like He and His Father were/are one – John 17:20-23. What a task!

As part of the process, ask yourself what else you were saved from. My contribution: We were saved from being subject to sin. Now born again believers do not have to sin. Sin has no more power over us. “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” – Col. 1:13. He has done all that is necessary to free us from having to sin. Now when we sin we do so of our own volition, because we want to, according to Jesus’ half-brother, James. We choose to sin. That means we have no excuse. No matter the temptation or the tempter, we do not need to sin. Therefore, we are totally responsible for committing that sin. On that ground, we go to the Lord in repentance, confessing our sin, with no alibi. Otherwise, we retain our guilt.

The Lord has opened the door to His throne of grace to help us avoid sinning and to remove the guilt of our having sinned. He tells us beforehand that if we will repent and confess to Him, He will forgive us and cleanse us. There is no need for any one of us to have any unforgiven sin when we appear before Him. We don’t get clean by never sinning [I hope you already knew that], but by leading a life of quickly repenting. Anyone who says they are without sin is a liar – 1 John 1:10.

1. Our American forefathers were someones special. Most of them were committed Christians. Some simply believed in a God/god. They all believed in the ways of the Bible. Therefore, although they had many disagreements, their lives and thought processes were compatible. They got the job done. Because today [July 4, 2017] is our annual day of remembrance of the labors of those men, consider what a tremendous task they undertook.

Their job: To create a government of people who were all equal. They agreed that all were equal because all were created equal by God. [They had to postpone settling slavery, or they would never have been able to form a government. Much more can be said on that.] Because all men were equal, they could be governed only by unanimous consent. [Seems like they were working themselves into a corner, doesn’t it?] Each of the thirteen British colonies had their individual brand of colonial governments. As part of dealing with the issue of unanimous consent, every colony [“state,” “nation”] that agreed to be part of the new nation was required to have the consent of its majority. It took two years and 8 months before all thirteen colonies agreed to be governed by a yet-to-be determined form of government.

The king of England had been their sovereign. He had been a disappointment to them but they still wanted a sovereign; just not a single person or group of sovereigns. They wanted the people to be their own sovereign. That was a new thought, but they were about to think many new thoughts. The form of government was to be republican, meaning people elected by the people to govern the people. So, the sovereign people would have no role in the function of their government! The sovereigns could not run their government, meaning the people wanted to be the sovereign but have no direct, immediate, hands-on control of their government. They knew that sovereignty, even their sovereignty, had to be harnessed, that sovereignty was a strong and dangerous thing for a person, a group, or a nation of sovereign people. So, the sovereign had to be outside the governance of the nation.

The governance would also be harnessed. There would be a three-part government, each of which had its delegated authority, duties and limitations, with checks and balances on each. The legislature [senate and house of representatives], the administrator [president], and the judiciary [Supreme Court and lower courts] were independent but were all dependent upon the other. Although the relative influence of one or the other may vary from time to time, they have their limitations, and any one or two can stop the other(s) from overstepping their limitations, if need be.

That’s enough about our forefathers, to whom we owe much. I am thankful for them. Yet, I have a thought that will only be answered in the hereafter. If they had abided a bit longer under the yoke, until the time when England got its sovereign king in hand, abolished slavery without war, and gave freedom to its other colonies [Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Newfoundland, and South Africa], could and should the American Revolution [rebellion!] have been avoided? Jesus, the perfect one, stood that sort of test. Perhaps we could have, also.

1. Join me in saying “ouch” to Isaiah 5:8, and deciding how to respond to it. It reads, “Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there is no more room, so that you have to live alone in the midst of the land!” I get the picture there of prosperity, of having an enlarged home in the countryside, on an estate where others are kept at sufficient distance so that I am not bothered with too-close neighbors.

That condition was this country boy’s desire, and I accomplished it! I had it! Then the Lord awakened me one night and told me to give it away to “X.” In the morning Nancy immediately agreed. Promptly, we did. Now we live in a small, nice town home several hundred miles away, which in turn is gradually becoming more home than we need. The Lord really is the Lord.

1. Are you in a tight spot, where the Lord wants you to do something but you have covenantal ties that restrict you and you know the Lord does not want you to violate them? You have no way to obey the Lord without breaking righteous covenants? Abraham was in that spot. The Lord told him to leave his country, relatives, and father’s house. Abraham had a son-to-father commitment with his father. His father was the head of the clan so Abraham could not part from him without his father’s permission, or until his father died. It took some years, but when his father died Abraham took his next steps to obey God.

Yet, he still had his nephew, Lot, who was a family responsibility. Abraham could not easily and righteously run off Lot or separate from him. So, after some more years, the Lord, Lot and Abraham righteously separated Lot and Abraham. When Lot left, the Lord immediately identified to Abraham the land that had been promised to Abraham from the beginning of Abraham’s obedience. Notice that part of Abraham’s obedience was in not tearing asunder his covenant with his father and his nephew. Abraham was obedient to God as much as he could be obedient, without becoming unrighteous. He trusted God to work out his dilemma. God did. More on this in Thought No. 10.

1. It looks like at least a two-step process: “.. seek and you will find ..” [Matt. 7:7] and “.. whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” [John 18:17]. Perhaps we can find our way to the kingdom’s gate but not humble ourselves as required in order to enter the short and narrow door. We have to dump our load and get on our knees.

That’s similar to entering the small gate and then having to walk the narrow way [Matt. 7:14], finding the treasure hidden in the field and having to sell everything in order to buy the field [Matt. 13:44], and finding a pearl of great value in the marketplace and selling all that we possess in order to buy it [Matt. 13:45-46]. Jesus repeated that teaching over and over in Scripture, and He did not exempt Himself from following His own advice. It seems like a two-step process that requires our attention – seek and find, then pay the price to enter.

1. One difference between the righteous and the wicked is that the righteous control their impulses, and the wicked are subordinate to their impulses. Self-control is a spiritual fruit that ripens as we abide in the Lord.
2. Adding to God’s word doesn’t seem to be such a bad thing, so the church does it big time. Simply interpreting Scripture is not adding to Scripture, but can lead to it. Outright adding to Scripture is so common that I think we do it without blushing. Eve clearly added to God’s word when she added, “.. or touch it, ..” She correctly said, “You shall not eat from it, ..” so when she added another prohibition it seemed to her like a good addition, actually “strengthening” God’s word.

If the Lord’s word says we are not to get drunk on beverage alcohol [which it does], but we add our theology that we should also not even drink beverage alcohol, that is adding to His word exactly like Eve did – especially when He also tells us that we should not abstain “from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer” – 1 Tim. 4:3-5. He also said, “.. no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink ..” – Col. 2:16.

Keeping God’s word means leaving it as He spoke it. Refer to Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Josh. 1:7; Prov. 30:6; and Rev. 22:18.

1. A covenant is a mutual agreement between two or more parties. Remarkedly, a covenant may also be established by only one side!

 We will consider two types of covenants:

1. Works, or performance based, such as, “If you will do this, I will do that.”

2. Redemptive, such as our being saved by grace, to which we contribute nothing of ourselves. In this case, the Trinity, with Christ as the covenant-head, settles our redemption forever. In the Old Testament, the faith of the faithful ones was based on God’s promise of the coming Messiah. Jesus had to come, and succeed, in order to reward the faith of the Old Testament saints. Marriage is and always has been a covenant of redemption, not of works – Prov. 2:17; Gen. 2:24.

Both types of covenant are in effect now between God and believers. Our redemptive covenant component is secure, final, and forever, so does not depend on our performance. The works component absolutely depends on our performance, such as, “If you abide in Me and My word abides in you, ask what you will and I will do it” – John 15:7. In our everyday lives we are always making covenants with people with whom we work, share the highway, live with, etc., in the church and out. Consider, “If you will stay on your side of the road, I will stay on my side.” Or, “I will work for you for our agreed salary, for as long as you pay me.” Or, “I will marry you for the remainder of our lives, no matter what happens.” Or, “You provide me with electricity and I will pay you at the end of the month.”

Now consider your dilemma if you knew that the Lord told you to leave your nation, your living father who was still your family authority, your family [including your wife], and your relatives. That would present God with a problem, would it not? You would know that the Lord had established you in those several covenants, and had told you to not violate them. But you also knew that what He said to you would lead you to break those covenants. You have no problem. The problem is the Lord’s, who never has a problem when dealing with a faithful [although imperfect] believer.

In Genesis chapters 12 and 13 Abraham found himself in that situation. His response was to be faithful to God. He did as much as he could do of the Lord’s command to “go,” but did not break his covenants with his father, wife and relatives. Abraham left his country with his in-charge, agreeable-to-going father; his wife, Sarah, [who was also his half-sister relative]; and his nephew-relative, Lot, who was his ward. They went a considerable distance, stopped for several years, going no further until his father died, leaving Abraham as the head of the tribe. The Lord had solved problem No. 1.

While on a visit in Egypt, Abraham became afraid for his life when Pharaoh had eyes for Sarah. He and Sarah lied, saying that Sarah was his sister, so that Pharaoh could have her without cutting off Abraham’s head. The ruse worked for a while, but the Lord stopped it in a way that made Pharaoh happy to give Sarah back to Abraham and send him safely and rewarded out of Egypt. In this case, the Lord put His stamp of approval on Sarah, that she was to stay with Abraham as wife. The Lord had solved problem No. 2.

But Lot was still the family ward of Abraham. Lot’s and Abraham’s flocks became too numerous for them to remain near one another. Abraham offered Lot the first choice of where to go, to the left or to the right, and Abraham took the remainder. As soon as Lot left, problem No. 3 was solved. The Lord immediately acted.

In Genesis 13:14, “The Lord said to Abram (Abraham), after Lot had separated from him, ‘Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.’” For years Abraham had obeyed the Lord as much as he could, while maintaining and fulfilling his God-given covenants. Abraham had trusted God and God had done His part. That’s the righteousness of faith.

1. Being faithful during the times of our biggest trials really pleases the Lord. Just think of the many examples of their faith that He preserved in Scripture and presented to us, even in our languages. The most grand entrance into heaven seems to be granted to martyrs, as with Stephen in Acts 7:54-60.

The Old Testament saints had much less knowledge of and revelation from the Lord than we have in the New Testament. Those who lived by faith have been and will be rewarded greatly. We who believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, although having not witnessed it, are more blessed than those disciples who witnessed His resurrection – John 20:29. In times ahead, when Jesus sits on His throne in Jerusalem, faith will fade in importance because He will then be there with us in our supernatural bodies and will be touchable, and in the natural vision and touchability of those who survived the tribulation and began repopulating the earth.

That which has come to pass no longer needs to be believed for, thus faith is not needed for that purpose. I’m sure that there will be more to say about this in due order. But in the meantime, as opposition to the truth continues to increase, and faith falters in many places, faith is highly valued in heaven.

1. The story of little Charlie Gard and his probably fatal rare disease is tragic on several accounts. One is that the state has decided for the parents what they can and can’t do medically for their child. The state is not a legal guardian of people, so it cannot assign us rights and dignity. The state is something the people have constructed to protect rights and dignity that we already have. [Is that only an American imagination that worked itself into political reality?]

The state tends to violate its position. When the family cannot do its job as the most important societal mechanism for protecting the rights and dignity which come from God, we do have the state to assist us, but it is bound by the rule of law to respect individual rights. Charlie’s parents did not want to withdraw life support from their alert child, and they had the financial means to continue his treatment.

On another account, there have been only 16 persons who have been known to have Charlie’s disease, and they died early in childhood. Giving Charlie the opportunity to live by administering presently available experimental treatment not only has the potential of extending his life or of curing him, but the medical knowledge gained will help others. It is in Charlie’s best interest that Charlie’s parents, not the state, make his decisions.

[As you may know, Charlie then died on 7-29-17.]

1. And while we are thinking about things bordering on the political, what did you think of President Trump’s talk in Warsaw? I’ll just point out that he spoke about the values of Western civilization: faith, family, economic vitality, limited government, national sovereignty, intellectual freedom, and the pursuit of excellence. The usual types spoke against him and what he said.
2. Supreme Court Justice John Roberts spoke recently at his son’s ninth grade graduation. One of his most ear-catching points was that it is good for every person that we eat a little dirt, and that it has been calculated that we eat about two gallons of dirt per person per lifetime – on average. He pointed out that medical science agrees with him [or vs.] because it is postulated that live organisms in dirt build a healthy immune system in humans. It’s called the “hygiene hypothesis.”

His higher point was that we must all endure a number of unpleasant things in life in order to get stronger. It is the tougher events of life that develop resilience to our inevitable hardships. One of our sons has often had occasion to say, with the confidence that comes from personal experience, “That which doesn’t kill me, strengthens me.”

1. Some responses to those who want revival in their church but do not want to change, at least not change much. That usually means, “We want more of our kind of people, more money, and more congregational activity but don’t change our liturgy, don’t get ‘spiritual,’ and don’t talk about the Bible, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit all the time. Responses:
2. Holy Spiritual revival in your church will result in less of the kind of people who are like you, and less people in number [for a while your numbers may really fall], then more people who are not your type. If you will take the new people to your heart personally, include them in your personal life [not just in the churchy things], and preach the Bible, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, you can expect the Lord to bring in good material so He can build His church.
3. The gates of hell in and around your church will be broken down by the army He will be building there with you.
4. There will be torrents of Living Water flowing out of your church because it will be flowing out of every revived person and into those eager ones who know they are dry.
5. That life will be beautiful among your flock, guaranteeing that you will be criticized by religious ones, especially by those of your former ilk. Some will try to copy your “program,” not knowing the real cost and that it is God’s program. But you will see your lost years being restored. Even the damage caused by the devouring locusts will be restored.
6. Your flock will be possessed by their love for Jesus, which will also take the form of love for others. Their love and testimony will bring in those who are hungry for the same, and they will lay down their lives alongside yours. Stay ahead of them on the crosswalk, if you can.
7. Your traditionalism will change. The Holy Spirit will change the ways you do things, not only your religious traditions. He will be reordering you and your congregation. He is very orderly, fresh, and has irresistible vitality. As much as you resist Him, and persist in resisting Him, you will find that the fresh presence and power of the Lord will decrease until you again become a dry place. Know this beforehand, that tradition is the opponent of revival.
8. On the other hand, there is no question that the Lord of the church works, even powerfully, in old structures. It was Him who had set them up, but as His work in the world progressed those structures became limits to His working. Today’s example of a limitation is that the Spirit is bringing the church with all of its Life [but not religiosity] into the workplace and raising up workplace ministers. Those ministers have very little religiosity but are alive to the Lord, forming flocks of believers, and watching over them – whether they are or are not involved in typical church-life on weekends.
9. The challenge to the traditional church [that’s all of us] is to recognize and support those workplace ministers and ministries, and to become servant brothers to them without trying to take them over. The key words are “come alongside them and serve them,” offering that which the Lord has given us, without controlling them. Like the Holy Spirit is our Paraclete, so are we to be to one another, including in this hour of revival in the workplace. Watch for the signs of our time, and read the signals. The tide is rising.
10. Tolerance can be a virtue, but tolerance of unrighteousness is not a virtue. We can love people either into the kingdom of God or into hell. Loving sinners requires that we reveal their sin and God’s judgment against sinners! If we don’t, we don’t love them.
11. Question: How do we get God’s blessings to flow abundantly?
12. Answer: Genesis 6:22 and 7:5 -- it worked for Noah. That leads us to ask: “Is there another way, please?”
13. Yes; 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 -- it worked for Solomon. But, wow!, is there another way?
14. 2 Samuel 24:17, 24-25 -- it worked for David. That was still tough, so is there another way?
15. John 18:11(b) -- it worked for Jesus. This is serious, but is there one last way.
16. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 – it worked for Paul. Now let’s talk.

Having given up on finding a way to God’s blessings that is easy on our flesh, you noticed that elements of the cross of Christ, and of our crosses, were in all those 5 examples: faith with works, repentance with prayer and fasting, submission to God’s chastening hand, obedience without measure or end, and the crown of righteousness. Those elements opened the storehouse of heaven in each case. To receive God’s blessings, we need only to get into alignment with Him, where He has already purposed His blessings.

Shove off into the deeper water where the current is strongest.

1. First of all, the Lord wants people whom He can conform to the image of His Son, Jesus. He wants us during our earth-life to demonstrate the preeminence of Jesus over all of creation. We, like was Jesus, are limited in doing this but even the limitation is our Father’s plan. After we are chosen, how does He do His work in us? He reveals His Son to us. That means the revelation of God’s nature, His love, and His offer. When we have accepted His offer, He puts of Himself [His Spirit] into us. That enables Him to change us from the inside out. After He is in us, we need nothing more of Him but we need less of everything other than Him. All things then work together to produce the end result, which is that Christ Jesus becomes all and everything.

Did you notice in that little narrative that the Lord did not start out planning to be liked? If His plan had been for Him to be liked by humanity, He would have had to compromise on everything every time, and He would have achieved nothing. How badly do you want people to like the Lord? Enough to lie about Him and our coming judgment? It took His death and our dying to ourselves for a segment of humanity to stop wanting the Lord to change. We are the ones who are in need of change, and it is total. Jesus’ and our crosses are the way to fall in love with the Lord.

1. Keep praying for Europe. The absence of Christian faith, mixed with materialistic values, has left them with nothing to counter the influx of Islamic faith. But, that which could be a downhill slide into darkness could instead be a gathering of those called to hear the gospel. Yes, pray, and be available as part of God’s answer.
2. An overview of all of it, by God, with at least a slight Texas slant:

1. The condition: “Before anything else existed, I was. We are three persons who are perfect love. Our perfect love made and keeps us one. Perfect love unifies and multiplies, so We wanted to multiply, no matter the cost. For example, We wanted to express our perfect love, including our mercy, but there was no needy object. We didn’t need others or anything, but We desired to give.”

2. The plan: “We will create others who will become like We are; therefore, they must be able to choose to be like us, but able to reject us and our love. If they choose us and our way of love, We will reward them beyond their imagination; if they rebel against us and our way of love, We will punish them beyond their imagination. We will extend perfect love, perfect justice and perfect judgment.”

3. The creating: “First We will create a perfect environment for our humans to begin, then two places for them to live forever. Those places will be called earth, heaven and hell. So, We did that which We planned.”

4. The processing: “Everyone sinned! Some regretted their sin but some chose sin as their lifestyle. Over millennia I revealed more and more of My love to them, which some appreciated. That pleased Me greatly. I forgave the penitent ones when they regretted their sins. Those asked for more than forgiveness of their sins; they asked for strength to not sin. I went among them to do as they desired, and they killed Me. On a cross outside of Jerusalem some saw undeniable evidence of their sin and My love. They repented so deeply that I put some of Myself into them. Then their lives and behavior changed as I worked My ways from their inside out. The more they loved Me, the less they sinned.

5. The deal, with those who have accepted My truth and love: With My newborn ones, I, the One who never breaks covenant, will always be with you. I covenant with you that:

1. I will communicate regularly with you, and you may communicate with Me at any time you desire or need. I like to do that. You will like it, too.
2. My love for you will be expressed as mercy, support, and protection. Your love for me will be expressed in worship [which is your life expressing My value to you], reliance [as shown by your confidence when in matters over your head], and honor [remembering our differences (that’s important!)].
3. Between the two of us we will have order like We Three already have in heaven. I will be your older brother and you will respect Me as such. I brought you into the family at great expense to Myself, the remembrance of which is a strong help to both of us. I will work to remove the walls that you imagine are still between us, and will work with you to love and obey Me in an honorable manner, as a younger brother should.
4. We will love one another very much. You will need some help on that, too.
5. I love all of My siblings, some of them because of their love and righteousness, and others for no other reason than I choose to love them. It is vital that you develop that love.
6. Through Me you will continually receive truth and strength, grace for repentance, and more than simple forgiveness [because you will be better off after being forgiven than you were before you sinned (Rom. 8:28; 1 John 1:9)].
7. I am working in your soul, in everything that enters your life and thoughts, to produce My glory in you [meaning that in and through you I am producing My eternal nature, and making it obvious].
8. And all of this covenant of My benefits to you will come about by My working in you. You will do nothing to earn it. It is not an entitlement. It is called grace.

6. “The deal, with those who reject my truth and love: Consider carefully. I, the invisible God, have given you an abundance of evidence of My reality. I created all things that you see and touch. They clearly reveal My power and divine nature. I even came there among you, leaving a testimony of My truth and love. You took My life and have not sought My forgiveness. Then I have continually entreated you. Justice is coming. You will be judged according to the decision you made about Me based on clear testimony I presented. Do not suppress the obvious truth. Your rejection of My truth and love will result in My rejection of you [Rom. 1:18-21; 2:12-16], to a place where you will be forever tormented. There is yet time for you to repent of your self-will and rebellion, to become one of My sheep, to learn righteousness, and to walk with Me in intimacy.

7. “Words to the redeemed, individually: Judge all things according to My word. Be patient and unafraid. Don’t try to design your soul, your testimony, or your ministry. I will do that as you walk with me. Remember that I forgave the sins of the sinful woman at the cost of My offending Simon the Pharisee who was My host? I accepted her and responded to her brokenness of life with transforming passion. I violated the social-religious code and damaged My reputation in the eyes of the “righteous.” But the personal transformation she experienced was invaluable. By My actions, the important ones present were convinced that I was not sent by God, but it was more important that she be forgiven of her sins and given a new life. [See Luke 7:36-50.] Do likewise. Walk with Me and I will design you from the inside out.

8. “Words to the redeemed, the church: I am neither surprised nor disappointed with you during your failures. I was prepared for your imperfections. I delivered you of your bondage to sin, and will continue to forgive you of your sinnings as you repent. I am helping you to diminish ‘you’ so that more of Me can come forth. Don’t despair that the church is a mixture of wheat and tares, sheep and goats, faithful and unfaithful, fruitful and unfruitful, organization and organism, and religion and relationship. I am in the midst of you [Rev. 1:12-13], talking to you, dealing with your sinnings, chiding and chastising you, and encouraging and redirecting you. I will never abandon My church, My imperfect bride.

“But remember this. Everyone who is on the roll of a church is not a member of My church. Membership rolls do not equate with membership among My redeemed ones. I will deal with that situation later [Matt. 13:41 (36-43)].”

1. Arrogance can indwell the intelligent, the stupid, the spiritual, and the etc. Peter started off with Jesus by being so convicted of his carnality and of Jesus’ holiness that he asked Jesus to go away and leave this carnal fisherman alone – Luke 5:8. He saw the soul-gap between himself and Jesus. Then, after 3 years of being with Jesus, Peter was caught up in a debate with the other disciples [Luke 9:46] in which they were considering who was the greatest among them. Peter went from carnal to spiritual, and at the same time from humble to arrogant.

The process of discipleship is designed to expose our souls, so that we can repent and become cooperative, moist clay in the hands of the Potter. Repentance adds water to dry clay so we are more malleable in His hands. Have you noticed that as you have grown spiritually there have been times when you suddenly and surprisingly acted unrighteously? Those times are helpful to us because they break our arrogance a bit more. Those are the Luke 9:46 times. We are like Mary’s alabaster box that needed to be broken before the aroma could be released.

I am told that those times actually do happen.

1. One cannot help but notice the boxing promotions on TV. Both of the combatants are hyped for the battle. At least it appears that way. Both are already victors, if you were to ask them. They are acting out their preeminence over the other, for their own sakes and for public display. They know they must yet fight, but each is already convinced that he is the victor.

Christian fighter, if you are learning to fight your battles from victory, you are entering God’s rest. You still have battles over sin, self, and Satan, but you are standing in victory in each battle. You are fighting from victory, not for victory. The battle and battles are won, even though you are still in them.

I recall that when I first understood that truth I began to accept its truth from situation to situation. It was an irregular learning process, not at all a consistent application or smooth result. But I believed the truth no matter the daily outcomes. In God’s due time the truth became more automatically applicable and brought more consistent results. My soul was entering God’s rest through yet another route. Thanks be to the Lord that His word is true, and that faith working in His little ones presents us with His victory.

1. You are encouraged to respond freely to this Thought: Only after we have received the Holy Spirit are we able to love the Scriptures. Until then we are able to admire them, to recognize that they are the ways of life, to teach them, to believe that they have come from God, and to label them “Holy,” “Blessed,” and other religious titles. But they are not yet “love letters to me from the Lord.” We are not attracted to them more than to learn or to help others to learn. We take them in doses, “as we need them.” In the meantime, we have other more important and interesting things to do and the Scriptures simply have to take their place among our priorities.
2. In Luke 7:36-50 notice that the Lord was not protecting His reputation, not working on His testimony, not trying to prevent offending His important host, and not trying to stay within the socio-religious code. As the Son of God, He was above thinking like that. [We sons of God are above thinking like that also, when we know who we are.] He focused on His assignment: Perceiving the truth in her soul, accepting a repentant sinner, forgiving her sins, fixing her broken life, transforming her, and starting her on a new life.

And what did He require of her? Answer: She had to come to Him, have repentance in her heart, and accept His forgiveness. To many, those are three very difficult obstacles. To some, those three are not enough.

1. What works in your soul when you read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43? Is it, “Good riddance!” Is it, “Is it I?” Is it that you want to begin identifying them in your church? Or is it, “What difference does it make?” All of us were tares, and some still are. Tares are planted in the church by the devil in his efforts to drain life out of the church. As said above in Thought No. 8, there are members on the role of Jesus’ church [all of whom are born again by the Spirit], and there are members on the role of the church that the world sees [those possessing God’s Spirit and those who do not]. The parable of the tares points to that condition. Tares are identifiable to us but we are told to not remove them.
2. If your air conditioner is not working well in this summer heat, here is something that will put an appreciated shiver down your spine. Question: How do you stop persecution? Answer: Compromise.
3. For what is water baptism? Answer: If done in the obedience of faith, it’s where symbolism meets reality.
4. Are you prepared for the next outpouring of the Holy Spirit? In what ways are you prepared to recognize the outpouring as being of the Lord, and to be an approving participant? Let’s check out some possible ways, all of which have some degree of merit:
5. I am expectant of another outpouring in my lifetime: Not good enough. The whole Jewish nation was expectant of the coming of their Messiah, but none recognized Him when He came among them. Even those who best knew, fell away in unbelief.
6. I know the Bible, so am assured that I will be able to recognize the outpouring: Again, not good enough. Among the many who expected Him, the religious leaders had their Scriptures memorized, including the Scriptures that described Him best -- Is. 52:13 🡪 53:12. After He came and went, those verses were purged, hidden, not taught openly, or otherwise denigrated.
7. I am learning to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to be led by Him: Good again, but not good enough. The Jews were very spiritual. They exorcised evil spirits [Matt. 12:27] and accused Jesus of having a bad spirit [Matt. 12:24]. Herod believed in spiritual powers, thinking that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead – Matt. 14:2.
8. I’m just leaving that in God’s hands: No doubt, that was the position of many, and not entirely bad.
9. It seems that the most fruitful abiding of the expectant, biblically informed, spiritually sensitive, trusting saint is something like: I know Jesus, His love is growing in me, I am bearing my cross daily, and I am learning to be led by Him.

The next moves or outpourings of the Lord are going on in many places right now. Larger ones will occur regularly until comes the one that will rock the world. It is important that we be ready to recognize His handiwork and to move with Him. It is also important to recognize spiritual movements that are not of the Lord.

1. God’s people were in bad shape during Ezekiel’s day, but the Lord was and had the solution to their problems. He was looking for one available man but could not find one – Ezek. 22:30. I wonder [but not for very long] if we and He are in a similar situation today? What has the Lord been doing with just one available man [or woman] in the many places in the world [neighborhood, town, city, state, nation] where He has found that person? What might He do with me or you where we are if we are available?

Nine years ago, the Lord told me what He was going to do in Corpus Christi, Texas, and that some things would not happen unless I was there. Because of that word, soon we were living in Corpus Christi, and still are. He is doing those things. My opinion is that I am doing very little to bring about His word, but He did not say that my doings were necessary, but only my being there. There are doings, but He is doing far more than would be expected from my little doings.

1. Let’s see if I can sound proverbial or prophetic:
2. I have noticed that most of those who criticize various methods of evangelism are those who do no evangelization at all. [However, the command to the church is not to evangelize, but to make disciples. The process of discipleship evangelizes the church and its neighborhood.]
3. Similarly, those who criticize the church for speaking too much about money are usually those who contribute the least.
4. Those who think that people are basically good also tend to believe that if you are good enough you will go to heaven.
5. We are called to walk in the light with the Lord and His people, whereby we will have our souls illuminated so that we can see and seen, and be cleansed of all sin. That is wonderful.
6. I have seen people start their walk with the Lord and His people, but when their souls were illuminated they broke off their walk because they wanted neither to see or be seen, and certainly did not want to change.
7. Jesus came to save us from the results of our sins, from the effect of others sins, and from the power of sin [meaning that we no longer have to sin].
8. We still choose to sin, but we are now freed from having to sin – it is now a choice. Thus, we bear 100% responsibility for every sin we commit. That’s great news because we have been told to repent, to come boldly before Him, to humbly confess our sins, and be forgiven forever for those sins. Becoming clean is far better than accumulating our dirt.
9. The more we actively live in the knowledge that we have been freed from sin, and that Jesus’ righteousness has been imparted to “me,” the less we sin. His nature has become my nature, which is increasingly lived outwardly. I try less to be righteous as His righteousness flows.
10. Some Texas paraphrasing of wonderful verses:
11. “We have to look past the things that we can see and touch, and look at the things that are not seen. The things that are seeable and touchable are temporary and weak. They are inadequate even now. But the things of God’s kingdom are already eternal, firm, and functional, so we live now as citizens of God’s kingdom and as His family” – 2 Cor. 4:18.
12. “We are not yet home, but we can and should already walk by faith, not by the things that we see and touch” – 2 Cor. 5:7.
13. “Faith is the most solid substance. It is the guarantee of those things that we can expect no other way. It is present evidence of that which is coming” – Heb. 11:1.
14. The main reason to be born again is because Jesus said we must be born again. He said that we cannot even see the kingdom of God until we are born again, although it is all around us. We can be taught the Bible, graduate from seminary, lead a congregation of God’s people, but not see His kingdom.

Then He added an obvious word, that if we cannot see it we cannot enter it – John 3:1-8. A blind man may know his way all around in the house, and be able to describe it, but when he is eventually able to see it, it is like he has entered a new home. He goes around looking at and feeling all those things that he thought he knew all about. If we cannot or will not see that which the Lord offers us, we cannot enter into it.

1. We deal with and work from partial truth and incomplete information on a daily basis. Science does that, parents do that, and Bible translators do that. Often, an incomplete or partly accurate truth will be enough to at least start us in the right direction. It’s not often that we will not move until we know all that is to be known and known completely. It’s like hiring someone who is not the entirely perfect employee – we can work with the imperfection as the employment progresses, and can even make allowances for the imperfection on a long-term basis. I suppose that is an expression of our being imperfect ourselves and living in an imperfect world and church. A way-out example of this is Pilate, who cared little for truth in any degree, at least in civilian matters: “What is truth?” -- John 18:38.

Sometimes we are unprepared for the total truth as, on occasion, Jesus told His disciples about themselves – John 16:12. He hid some things from them and revealed them progressively. They, as we, have to grow with what we have before we can move ahead. That’s a good teacher’s modus operandi, is it not, as the learning process is controlled and contained. It reminds me of a rancher’s wife who was asked by her very small child, “Mom, where do baby calves come from?” Her answer, until sometime later, was, “The mama cow ‘moos’ and the calf comes running out of the bushes.” That was enough information for her child at that time.

There are times when we must live with partial truth, even tainted truth, even though it is painful and frightening to do so. In some cases, if we refuse to act upon the bit of truth that we have, we will lose even the benefit of that bit which we have. The military lives through many of those situations as they necessarily act upon the best intelligence they have. On many occasions, they have accurate information but don’t like the truth of it, that they are vastly outnumbered and outgunned. Tactics must be adjusted for the occasion, like Jesus told us in Luke 14:31-32.

Yet, as we face the unknown and partly known and painfully known all day we are content because we know the All-mighty, All-knowing, Always-present God is with us. That great and comforting truth still leaves us informationally incomplete, because we don’t know just what He will do while He is with us. To fill in that information gap, we do know that He will do only and always the best. The best may be frightening to our flesh, painful to body and soul, and challenging to our faith, but it is His best for us every time. Our lack of knowledge may lead us into a time of deeper evaluation, and we may seem to get over our heads in our faith-walk, but He never fails us. That is the complete truth.

1. That which is known as “The Great American Eclipse” is coming on 8-21-17. The Moon will be between the Sun and the Earth. The eclipse will be seen only in USA America, including Alaska and Hawaii. If that is prophetic to you, what do you see?

Until the next time, or when we get home.