THOUGHTS OF FEBRUARY, 2018

1. “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand” – Matt. 12:25. Fear and faith, manifestations of different kingdoms, cannot long coexist as free choices in our lives, such as accepting and acting upon fear on one occasion and then accepting and acting on faith on the next occasion. Soon, one will dominate and the other will fade as we settle into a lopsided compromise [if we choose fear], or into a life filled with Life [if we choose faith]. We have the choice to make. The Lord gives us grace to choose Life, which ordinarily produces opportunities to deliberately reject fear despite obvious reasons to be fearful.
2. So, you run from some of your cross experiences, do you? So do I. The flesh is weak. When I find myself running or ready to run, I know that I have been walking according to the flesh and need to come to my senses, apprise myself of the situation, and stop wiggling to avoid the nails. Psalm 118:27 has to do with our commitment to the crosswalk – binding ourselves with cords to the horns of the altar. Those alive animals were bound to the altar, then sacrificed. To them “it was not fair,” so don’t fall for that sort of thinking about yourself. Choose the way of Life.
3. Here are some points from our recent Saturday Night Bible Study series, to which you are always invited. We “jammed” a lot, meaning we stretched our thoughts, loosely corralled them with our knowledge of scripture, and tried to not become outright heretics as we stretched a bit.
4. We studied Jesus’ family, both the natural and spiritual.
5. Then we studied God as being His own family – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, their individual personalities and functions, noting that He always refers to Himself as masculine. What does that mean?
6. One of the points about our heavenly Father was that He is ready and able to endure extreme distress for His family’s sake. We asked the wives present to describe their husband’s record of enduring extreme distress for the family’s sake. Surprisingly, that was a difficult task for them. It was not difficult for the husbands to name the same for their wives.
7. We then studied Jesus Christ’s outstanding character and function as God the Son, which included His purposing to do only His Father’s will, staying on a project until it was finished, receiving all who came to Him because He knew that only His Father could bring them, and not longing to be free from authority.
8. Lastly, we studied the Holy Spirit as the silent servant, doing His job without needing recognition or reward, but rejoicing when others get the recognition and reward for what He actually does. Piece of cake for us, right?
9. Then we moved our conversation to the church, always considered feminine by our masculine God, especially when compared to Himself, such as “the bride of Christ.” We noted that the masculine God is preparing a feminine wife, and questioned why. Certainly, we men can appreciate that addition to our masculine humanity. God pointed that out to us when He created Adam, saying it was not good for Adam to be alone – Gen. 2:18. Then He created Eve, a woman, so that Adam would be suitably provided for – not simply a physical accessory for sexual enjoyment and procreation.
10. For 2,000 years God has been building the feminine church, placing each part of her into Himself in Christ. That [as all other of His actions] proceeded from His heart [meaning His love], His mind [meaning His wisdom], and His determination [meaning His power]. That process has been going on from before the beginning of time, started taking creative form 6,000 years ago, took an eternal leap forward when Christ came to earth and did the impossible for us, and began the process of becoming engaged [betrothed] to us [the church] by incorporating us individually into Him.
11. As each of us is called out of the masses of the world to be engaged to Jesus, the Holy Spirit works to bring us into submission to Christ. At that point we asked the husbands how they were doing with their project of bringing their wives into subjection to them. I was not surprised at the wisdom-producing testimonies.
12. A major method for making half of the church submissive and obedient is by placing it under the authority of the other half – 1 Cor. 11:2-9; Eph. 5:22-24. In the natural, that is a set-up for disaster.
13. A major method for making the other half of the church loving is by placing it in authority over the other half – Eph. 5:25-33. In the natural, that is another set-up for disaster.
14. When the Father gave the church to His Son, a major action for the accomplishment of the Son’s task was to take into and upon Himself all of the church’s “stuff.” That means sins, etc.
15. The time is nearing for our wedding in heaven, after which we will be Christ’s wife – Matt. 22, Rev. 19. Having been “in” Christ through earth-bound engagement and covenant, then becoming His wife through heavenly ceremony and covenant, shows a progression of God’s plan for Himself. He will then be Father, Married Son, and Holy Spirit. The church will become the perfect wife, in her Husband, one with Him.
16. So, why was Eve created for Adam and for God? Since God is doing it, can we say that it is not good for God [the Trinity] to be alone? What are His plans for us out there in eternity? The magnitude of our future is not yet apparent, but we can stretch for it.
17. Look at the civil governments in your lives, no matter the nation, state, or city. The Lord rules. He brings up and puts down rulers. His hand is dominant in the process. Yet, we recognize evil on every level of government including, unfortunately, family and church government. So, how do we handle it? There is no way we can design one way to fit all situations, but there are some guidelines. First, the Lord rules! He is always doing something in every situation. Obey what He has already said. Then properly relate to the governing person or group – don’t rebel. Obey, but do not sin. David, on his way to becoming king of Israel, refused to lift a hand or voice against evil King Saul. He bided his time and was rewarded for it. The most high God governs the affairs of men – Dan. 4:25-26. Some die without being rewarded on earth, but their reward for being faithful to God comes in His time. Don’t lose yours.
18. Everyone who receives these THOUGHTS is a born-again Christian, but not everyone who reads them is a Christian. Multiple believers and non-believers who live in state institutions of enforced higher learning read these words as they are passed around. So, knowing that you need a fresh start in life, know that your fresh re-start is through being born-again. You are being offered a new life, not a re-polished life but an entirely new life because the Lord will make you a new person. You will start life over again as a new person, actually like a little child. You need a new mind, a new heart, and a new way of understanding things. Go to the one who received this material, or to the chaplain, and ask to start over at the very first. You will receive a new life. The Lord wants you to have your fresh start. He will put His Spirit in you and you will become one with Him. All of your sins will be taken away and you will receive Jesus Christ’s righteousness. That’s reality.
19. First there is Jesus. He is totally wonderful in Himself. He is adequate. Then come the things about Jesus. It seems that we are compelled to add many things to Him. The things about Him are good but are variable according to religion’s times, places and persons. Those three variables add things about the things about Him. [Yes, “things about the things about Him.”] Those things account for the myriad of things that separate the church into its many parts, instead of unifying us. [Correction: Actually, it is a lack of love that allows us to be separated by and into our differences.]

The point is that all around us we see that Jesus is not enough, and that more than Jesus becomes too much. Millions of our other brothers and sisters around the world have found that Jesus Himself is enough. They are not loaded down with all of the things about the things about Jesus. They have great heart-felt and functional unity in the Holy Spirit’s hands.

Paul saw this and wrote for us who are here in 2018, “But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ” – 2 Cor. 11:3. Christ plus nothing is SOMETHING! Christ plus things is distractive from Him but attractive to the flesh. We find ourselves loaded with somethings, and with Christ being diluted and crowded out. The answer: Christ only, and Him crucified.

1. How good are you about doing nothing? Are you peaceful and fulfilled while doing nothing? While doing nothing, do you feel that your time and talent is wasted? If so, your next temptation will probably be that your time spent alone with Christ is wasted. Next comes the temptation that time spent serving Him is wasted. I suppose that the next would be that religion is worthless, which it is. Best to draw close to the Lord and not be dependent on the fluff. Sit at His feet and you will always know that you are valuable to Him, and to your heavenly family. Then, in your rising, you will be fruitful.
2. The focus of the church is Christ, then His family, then the world. Its focuses produce an outflow of the mercies of Christ. Focusing on the Lord [who is our life] produces worship, godliness and quality. Focusing on His family [in which we abide] produces unity and maturity. Focusing on the world [to which we are sent] produces excitement and newness of life. The church has been given a sword, the sword of the Spirit, with which/Whom we are effective in our focuses.

The focus of the world’s governments also goes in many directions -- safety, preparedness, communication, equality, education, transportation, and more. Contrary to our occasional opinions, civil government is ordained by God to do good in many areas, and has been given a different sword [force] to enforce its ministry. America’s most recent focus is to be more business-like, at home and abroad. The business focus now guides our aid to other nations, such as the Palestinians. Previously we had been giving them billions of dollars no matter how they acted. Now they must exert self-control and develop openness in order to feed at the trough.

1. “Many are called, but few are chosen” – Matt. 22:14. How about this paraphrase: “Many are called to and receive their eternal salvation, but few of the called become available and adequate material as I construct My church.” That’s the message in Hebrews 3 and 4.
2. How good are you at taking the types, shadows, allegories, etc. of the Old Testament and applying them to your New Testament life? Remember that those things happened to those folks, and were recorded, for our sakes – Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11. The Lord has had us, the church, as His focus through the ages all the time, and the church age is about to come to its planned end.

Check yourself on your grasp and self-application of this part of God’s purpose:

1. Israel was lost and enslaved in Egypt.
2. Israel was given a savior, Moses, the servant of God.
3. To be freed from their slavery Israel themselves needed to sacrifice common lambs and trust their God for it to mean to Him and to do for them that which He said it would.
4. Israel was twice baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea – 1 Cor. 10:1-2.
5. Israel was disappointed when they found themselves in the wilderness instead of being given their Promised Land outright. They wanted the fullness of God’s promises as soon as the lambs’ blood had been applied to them and they had been twice baptized.
6. Israel had to trust and obey their God, and endure many trials in their wildernesses, in order to enter their Promised Land.
7. Most of Israel who accepted the lamb’s blood, obeyed God, came out of Egypt, and were appropriately baptized died in their wilderness, missing their calling to enter the Promised Land.
8. Most did not appreciate the necessity of such a high degree of obedience and faith. They were after the blessings so did not appreciate the trials nor get the blessings.
9. Only the trusters and obeyers entered into the fullness of God’s promises on earth. The others dried up in the wilderness.

 Let me know if you need some self-application help, and add to my list if you can.

1. In all of that exercise on allegories about the church, don’t miss God’s central purpose for creating the church – to put Himself in us and put us in Him. By the reality of faith, we are already in Christ [but not all who will be in here are here yet, the Lord being very patient and longsuffering] and He is in us. It is a mystery that the world cannot understand because the Lord has deliberately hidden it from them until it is His time. But in our days, these New Testament days, the mystery has been revealed to those who believe into Jesus Christ. The eternal God has made known to us the unbelievable wonder of that mystery, which is Christ in us, the assured down payment on His mighty and eternal promises – Col. 1:26-27. If you see it, you are headed for glory.
2. When we were born again, lots of wonderful “impossible” things happened to us. One of those things that continues to amaze me is that we became the righteousness of God – 2 Cor. 5:21. I have to focus my mind on the truth of that statement [meaning remind myself of its truth] because the evidence is often contrary. Actually, if I had a more perfect view of God’s functional righteousness compared to my functional righteousness, there would be no evidence of my righteousness; that gap being too big to see myself by comparison.

BUT, we are not righteous, sanctified and redeemed because of our functional righteousness. We are righteous only because our Father identifies [deems, accounts] us with His perfect and sacrificed Son. We are now in/within Christ and our Father identifies and deals with us through/in Him. On the cross Jesus got all of our sins dumped on Him and we got all of His righteousness [etc.] dumped on us. Knowing that, and having faith in that truth, accomplishes the finished product in us. We get a glimpse of the finished product and hope for more of the same in the future, but our Father sees it in the now and works on and in us to bring the eternal truth into our functional now. That is “impossible.” Aren’t you glad that it is His job to get it done? Here is an encouragement: Take your eyes and hands off of your soul, submit to Him, trust His word in the matter, and rest.

1. As of the date of this typing [2-12-18] Israel is preparing for a “military campaign” on its northern border. It is almost inevitable. The nation is preparing for war, which may break out any day. At the same time, Israel is trying to get Russia and the United States to intervene, to prevent the war which would pit it against Syria, Lebanon, Hezbollah, Iran and Russia. We are fortunate to have the relationship with Israel as described in Proverb 17:17 – “A friend loves at all times, and a bother is born for adversity.” The Lord blesses those who are blessings to Israel.

There is little doubt that the time of the end of all things as we have known them is at hand, and Bible students know that the things now happening will and must happen at the end. A major happening to watch for is the total destruction of Damascus, the capital of Syria. Russia and its specific allies are aligned and poised. Israel is ready. Spiritual forces have arranged the players. Iran’s leaders are saying, “Jerusalem’s liberation is near.” Saints, be ready for the going up.

We are told that the end times will be like the days of Noah, when people were saying that things will continue as they have always been and that nothing will happen of the sort Noah experienced. But Noah prepared himself and his family with obedience and faithfulness, and they preached righteousness to their neighbors. Extraordinary things happened just as God and Noah and his family said they would.

1. A brother, D. U., who is still on the foreign missionary field, commented on the not-so-gradual advanced deterioration of his mainline denomination. He says it is imploding and breaking up over “the best way to be inclusive,” meaning how to blend abominations with holiness. He recognizes that hell is more inclusive than heaven [if you want inclusiveness] because there is only One Way to heaven but many ways to hell. That’s a clear picture of the situation.

Blindness and deafness have always been afflictions of the religious. The “church” that man builds comes out of his own mind and heart, and can be very creative. But it does not give Life, certainly not the eternal life of the church that Jesus is building. Adam wanted to remain inclusive with Eve, who had eaten of the forbidden fruit and was about to die, so he disobeyed God and joined her by doing the same. Those who live and die in Adam can devise what sounds to them like good religion, but it leads to the pit. Those who labor to create their own church, labor in vain – Ps. 127:1. The watchmen who should have been guarding the construction process should have stayed awake; now those who see the coming devastation must speak up.

1. What strange ways Jesus had and has to build His church. He thinned the crowd of both gawkers and disciples by telling them they had to drink His blood and eat His body – John 6. There is no way that group could understand what He said except in its direct context. The result: Many of them turned around and went back home. That’s what He wanted, because He was actively building His church. He did not have a plan to attract them or to keep them involved.

Then He turned to the inner core [the 12] and invited them to leave also. They stayed. By using scripture allegories, He told us that those who left were green fruit. They were not proper material for what He was building, at least at that time. We are offered the same “Holy Spiritual nerve” [confidence, boldness, clarity, freedom and faithfulness] as Jesus had. Let’s use it.

1. According to the degree of your self-control, please stop reading until you recall why you first came to Jesus.

Now, will you please stop reading again until you can answer why you are now trusting and obeying Him.

My Thought is that those two answers are different; that they change over time and one’s experience. The Lord takes us as we are and, if we continue with Him, changes the desires of our hearts.

Are your answers on this list?

1. To be with Him.
2. Had a need.
3. Curiosity.
4. Cultural or family custom.
5. Youthful excitement.
6. Wanted to go to heaven instead of hell.
7. Wanted to be on the winning side in life.
8. Liked His teachings.
9. Dissatisfied with life as it was.
10. The gospel made sense to me.
11. So that I could “waste” my life on Him.
12. For His sake.
13. Wanted to know Him better.
14. [and more]
15. Is there anyone whom you have not forgiven as completely as did Joseph in Genesis 45:4-15? Dear ones, let’s do it without delay and without reservation. And put a big, beautiful bow on it.
16. Have you been noticing that you have been receiving the desires of your heart more and more over your recent years? Despite your failures, nothing has been a failure? You have been confident even in your unanswered prayers? No sacrifice has been made in vain? Could the reason for such rich blessings be that you had set the course of your life to walk with and serve the Lord, began feeding on His resulting faithfulness, found yourself delighting in Him, loving Him, and quietly been having your desires changed to His? If you have been seeing those things, it should be no surprise that you have been receiving the desires of your heart. You are on a well-traveled course.

Here is its description: “Along your way you let simple evildoers alone. Despite their success, you didn’t join them or copy them. Sure enough, you made the right decision; their success was only temporary. You trusted the Lord and behaved yourself. You held your position when your position was not popular to hold. So, the Lord nourished you on the results of your faith – His righteousness. Then you noticed that while you were delighting yourself in the Lord, He was changing your heart’s desires to His heart’s desires. On reflection, you noticed that that had required the sacrifice of your entire life, not only a portion during some difficult moment. That would have never worked; it would have resulted in another part-time believer with continual ups and downs. More and more, you trusted Him every moment of every day, and He did it! You began to be an example of righteousness and godly judgment.” This paragraph is a paraphrase of Psalm 37:1-6 and is the story of Real Life.

1. I am almost 88 years old and notice that I have a high degree of expectations from the Lord. It’s not 100%, because there are some logical lower expectations of both body and mind. But the Lord’s grace and callings go beyond anything I may not expect. There is a background of “whatever you want, Lord” at work, given to me as if to mop up on an occasional improper low expectation. There are major projects on the horizon and if He wants me to be part of them, I am available. In the meantime, there are dozens of smaller but highly important projects in-hand daily. Life is good and will stay that way, no matter the outward appearances and circumstances. It is a blessing to have been granted a peek into the lord-ness of Jesus.
2. Our Christian walk deals with our “self.” We learn to not yield to the “self” and to deny the “self.” Yet, the “self” is essential. It’s not necessarily carnal; it has its place in kingdom living. We learn to die to the demands of our “self” but not to misuse or kill the “self.” The person with a dense emotional depression has a minimally functional “self.” It is almost like it has been turned off.

The “flesh” is different from the “self.” The “flesh” is the self-centered “self.” We are not to submit to our “flesh,” but to resist and deny it, or “put it down.” God gives us grace to enable us to overcome our “flesh.” For example, He gives us what, who, where, when is necessary for us to not cheat on our tax payments, or to drive more carefully, or to make and keep long-term commitments, or to be sweet when our wives are not [not a frequent need].

The “self” is also known as our soul, without which our body is actually physically dead. Our “self” is meant to be controlled, which the Holy Spirit will do as we walk in faith with Him. That’s why self-control is listed as one of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:23. It’s part of the same process as are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. In other words, the “self” is very important and needs to be perfected. When polished it will shine, revealing Jesus in us.

Faithful Christians sometimes throw the baby out with the dish water, meaning in this case that they want to be God-directed and God-controlled instead of self-directed and self-controlled. They are threatened with the good aspects of the word “self.” Instead they desire that the Lord control and direct them so completely that they themselves [their “selves”] need not and indeed should not provide direction and will to their own lives. But the Lord did not create us as humans and re-create us as His sons to be robots. We have selves that are meant to be fully alive and yielded to Him so we can be self-directed, self-controlled, self-motivated, self-taught, self-supporting, self-etc. -- all perfected under the hand of God so that for me to be me is Christ.

1. Let’s give thought again as to why the Lord sent Moses back to Egypt to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, but over and over hardened Pharaoh’s heart so that he would not allow the Israelites to leave. The reason was given them several times by the Lord, that He was proving Himself to Israel. He was proving to them that He, creation’s Creator, was absolutely in charge of all His creation, and that He had chosen certain people [Israel] to reveal Himself to, to be with them, and to set them above all other people. Had they learned that lesson in Egypt, they would have gone directly to the Promised Land in less than two weeks and taken it over, setting up God’s kingdom on earth such as it should have been at that time.

You know the gospel story; they lived it just like we live it: The Lord sent them a deliver [Moses], one of their kind. Moses showed himself to be God’s man, God working with him with strong miracles to prove that he was God’s man. With God’s power, Moses vanquished all that Egypt had to offer in opposition. Israel began to believe, to come under conviction, to see that goodness and reality were being offered, even to believing that the blood of sacrificed lambs would save them from their slavery in Egypt. As they believed and acted upon that belief, they were baptized into Moses as they passed through the Red Sea into the wilderness, on their way to the Promised Land – their and our place on earth where/when the fullness of God’s promises are functional in our earth-lives.

Then was their time to use their memory, that Moses would not only deliver them from their past but also take them into their victorious future. But many would not apply their past to their future, so they could not enter the Promised Land. Rightly, they knew that they were no match for the warring nations in the Promised Land, but neither had they been a match for Pharaoh in Egypt.

What a tremendous unlearned lesson!

1. When I was a boy, the socialists were telling us that we needed to socialize [forcibly take money away from the rich and give it to the poor] the country because people were so poor. Now that a few years have passed, the same-minded political descendants of those people are telling us that we need to socialize the country because people are so rich. Civil government seems to adjust itself according to whatever might sell to the masses. We should not be like that.
2. It is not sinless perfection that God seeks of us. That is why He sent His perfect Son, and He got what He wanted from Him – sinless perfection. It is our trust in the Son’s sacrifice that God seeks of us.
3. In the English-speaking world, the Bible has been the best seller, without exception, for over 400 years. Except for 1951, the Bible also has been the best seller worldwide. Do you know which book was the worldwide “best seller” that year? It was Mao ZeDong’s Little Red Book. But the Bible was freely sold or given and freely read, while the Little Red Book was received and learned on penalty of death. The Bible brings Life; the Little Red Book brings death.