THOUGHTS OF AUGUST, 2013

1. It may be better for us if we reject the truth outright instead of accepting it but rejecting its intended effect in our lives, usually meaning willful disobedience. That can be about biblical truth, engineering truth, financial truth, medical truth, etc. We are usually held less responsible by God and man if we do something in simple ignorance, compared to willful neglect and disobedience.

Even though accepting the aplicability of the truth [considering being obedient to it] may challenge us by stirring us to uncertainty and fear, giving ourselves totally over to the truth puts us in a better place and eventually brings peace and eternal success, plus probable temporal success.

If we know the truth but do not give ourselves over to the truth, one consequence is that the truth will eventually wane. That process is made worse if we put a spin on our disobedience, which is usually to justify ourselves. We eventually lose the truth – Rom. 1:18-32. That is also why some of us don’t grow spiritually or hit a spiritual plateau unless we repent. We acknowledge the truth but do not accept the consequences of the truth, namely, do not change according to the truth. Eventually, the truth to us, the manna from above, becomes stale manna and is eventually good for nothing except for dead doctrine. In that case, we have “the truth” but it is dead truth, like faith without works is dead faith [Jam. 2:17].

2. It is a temptation to think that one person today, this week, or in a lifetime cannot make a difference. We should know better than to think that way, even if we are not Christians. Consider what would have been different if the Lord had found that one person He was seeking in Ezekiel 22:30. He is still looking for those who are nobodies, have nothing, and are going nowhere. Those are the elite members of His Special Forces group.

3. Here is a sure-fire piece of advice for at least temporary financial success, from J. Paul Getty [1892-1976], American industrialist: “Formula for success: rise early, work hard, strike oil.” For you, which is the most difficult of the three?

4. Avoid confusion. Don’t accept it. Reject it when you see it beginning. Lack of knowledge or contradictory knowledge do not in themselves cause confusion, meaning disorder, although they may produce what may be called wonderment or bewilderment, meaning simply that “things do not make sense.” Confusion is the work of Satan and is meant to destroy the orderliness of our mind and our think-ability. The Lord gives us an orderly, sound, disciplined mind; the power to keep our peace; and love no matter the confusion of others around us or the mass of conflicting information supplied to us – 2 Tim. 1:7.

5. Saints have a personal, convicting knowledge that Jesus is worthy to be praised and worshiped, even before finding such information or instructions in Scripture – Rev. 4:11. One of the things that immediately motivates us to praise Him is that we know we and all saved humanity were unworthy of any saving grace.

After being born spiritually [saved] into God’s family, some may wonder about the basis for our on-going worthiness and worthlessness. Are we then, of our spiritually reborn selves, worthy of the Lord and the things He does for the remainder of our earthly and heavenly lives? In His eyes, yes; because He loves us and is full of grace(s).

Of course, our worthiness as members of His family is because He has made us worthy. But there are 3 areas of self-responsibility for being counted worthy [vs. unworthy] of being here in the eternal life given through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. All three are in the area of responding to His love and grace. If we fail in any of those 3 particular responsibilities we do not get kicked out of His family and do not get sent to hell and do not have to “start over,” but we are labeled “Unworthy of Jesus.” What a disaster that would be, to hear that from Jesus or our Father.

Those 3 areas of self-responsibilities are: 1) One who loves father or mother more than he loves Jesus is not worthy of Jesus, 2) one who loves son or daughter more than he loves Jesus is not worthy of Jesus, and 3) one who does not take up his cross and follow after Jesus is not worthy of Jesus – Matt. 10:37-38. He was very clear in those verses.

Jesus’ order of action in those verses is to first take up our crosses, and then follow Him. It may be worth considering if one must do it in that order -- first take up our cross before he can follow Jesus. Surely we can follow Him without taking up our cross!!? Read those verses to your Sunday School Class, then ask them that question. Carrying our cross means we are committed to not doing things our way, on our schedule, or with our choice of companions. Can we follow Jesus without doing what He does; without following His instructions, without taking up our cross daily? More on this in Thought No. 10.

6. It requires very little for a saint to walk in the Spirit; the less the better. The more of ourselves we are, the less we walk in the spirit. The less we are, the better.

7. There are two really helpful qualities of character that help produce a peaceful and peace-giving life – 1) repentance as a life style, and 2) a genuine spirit of brotherhood. There are many ways to say the same two things.

About repentance: It is a continual process of agreeing with that which the Lord shows us about ourselves, then making the necessary adjustments as enabled by His grace. His showing us ourselves may be by a whisper in our spiritual ears, or a loud shout from a fellow human, or an insight on our part into some life circumstance. But when He shows us, don’t be surprised if He does not give grace to change immediately. He may give us grace to trust Him while we are being further humbled by our weakness, and then He will change us. There may be some things more important than the immediate removal of our current thorn, such as deepening our dependence on Him, coming to see more of Life from His perspective, or the ability to make future adjustments in our life more quickly by being freed from God-given righteous entanglements [job, congregation, family, nation, etc. – Luke 14:25-35].

8. An apostle establishes a proper fire for the group and the relationship of the fire to the group; a prophet tells us how the embers of the past are to be used today, and how future fires are to affect us now; an evangelist stokes the fire; the pastor gathers his group around the fire; and the teacher gives all a thorough understanding of the fire. That describes the function of the five-fold ministry in one homely, unbound volume.

9. I did not know that I was discontented with my life until I was presented with the living, applicable, full gospel over our after-dinner table one Saturday evening about 50 years ago. Then I went full-time for the Lord, leaving everything of my life behind me – at least I left all behind that did not go with me. My point is that I was not consciously aware of my discontent until I saw the Light. I didn’t even reject my life as it was to that point; I simply stepped into the Light and moved forward. Conscious repentance was not even a part of the event – I just stepped out of my old life and into Jesus. The past was dead and gone.

That must be the religious expression of that which Thomas Edison, 1847-1931, American inventor, was talking about when he said: “Discontent is the first necessity of progress.” Spiritual truth is applicable to all areas of life. That’s because we are in an integrated and coordinated world and universe. Walking in the Spirit aligns us with the Lord of all, and misaligns us with the lord of this world. If others have already established a measure of the kingdom of God in the world, we will align with it but not with any of the kingdom of darkness.

Not to worry. We are in His good hands in any case.

10. If your boss said, “Pick up that basket and follow me,” what would you do? Of course, you would pick up the basket and follow him. If you followed him without the basket you would be useless, in trouble and cause trouble in His project.

You see the point already. Our Lord [Boss] said, “Pick up that cross and follow Me.” If we decide to follow Him without picking up the cross, we are in trouble. And, we cause trouble among the other workers who see what we are doing. They copy us, especially if we are their parents or church leaders. We claim to be following the Boss and that carrying the cross is not necessary, except perhaps at special times.

Delight yourself in Matthew 16:24-27 and related verses.

11. Don’t be reluctant to talk about touchy, fearful or painful topics. Those feelings actually show the need for discussion of those topics, not their avoidance. The truth spoken in love never fails to accomplish God’s purpose among those who love the Truth, and even among those who do not love the Truth [it uncovers the truth about them].

So let’s be bold and wise about touchy topics and take the advice of our brother Booker T. Washington [1856-1915], American scientist, educator, author and political leader, who said: “Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome.” Are not most obstacles within us?

12. Self-chosen labels are all around us. They proclaim our self-images and the nature of our products. They are necessary. They also proclaim what we want others to think of us or of our products. In a perfect world all of that would be helpful and righteous. However, not all self-images are accurate. It is interesting to see what people think of themselves by reading their self-labels.

13. Pick your church; any church. It is probable that the Lord has already met the needs of that church, while yet prayers are being offered up for those needs. Their needed ministers are likely to be right there among them. Their finances are likely to be right there also. The statement is probably accurate that “The Lord has supplied all your present and soon-coming needs.” The question to be answered, then, as we look around the room at ourselves, is “With whom has He stored it?”

14. What is revealed about us when we trust others? Perhaps much, but at least that we are more relaxed and available to the Lord than some who have difficulty trusting others. The roots of trust are in 3 things: Our being nobodies, who have nothing, and who are going nowhere. That being defined says: 1) Our not being full of ourselves. Not being Number One. Loving our brother/neighbor as ourselves. 2) Being stewards of God’s stuff. It doesn’t belong to me. Whatever He wants to do with it is fine with me. 3) My aspirations are in God’s hands. I’m available to Him. Wherever He wants me to go, I will go. I’ll also sit on my hands if He wants me to sit.

15. Have you been sweating over some promise the Lord made to you, wondering if it was really Him [delay is for the purpose of revealing our unbelief, and for strengthening our faith], or that it might not come to pass because of some sort of unrighteousness on your part [it is His business to fulfill His own word, unless He put an “if you will ..” in His promise]?

It should encourage all of us in the area of God’s promise as we recall those He made to Abraham about 4,000 years ago, and still not completely fulfilled. One of those promises was that He would bring Israel back to their Land because He had given it to them as an everlasting possession. He said He was forming them into a nation that would reach a fallen world, and that nothing would stop Him. This appears to be the time of fulfillment of that promise, because it is being done now and before our eyes. We can rejoice in God’s faithfulness to Israel, which causes us to rejoice in His faithfulness to all and to Himself.

It is perhaps a greater miracle that the Jews have survived the millennia of exile and scattering. No other people in history have survived an exile and been reestablished in their ancient homeland.

An example of this miracle is the story of the B’nei Menashe [Sons of Manasseh] in India. They had only an oral history, but it taught them that they had been exiled from their homeland somewhere and had moved to China. Eventually, in ancient times, the Chinese emperor had taken away their scrolls and begun persecuting them.

They fled to India where over the centuries their memories of the writings became faint. One of their remaining folk songs was called “The Separation of the Red Sea.” It sang of their ancestors crossing the Red Sea on solid ground. Their day of rest was on Saturday so they did not work the rice paddies or go hunting on Saturday – until the British missionaries came to India and changed their day of rest to Sunday.

Finally they found that their ancestor, Manmashi, was Manasseh the son of Joseph. The government of Israel has recognized that they are indeed the lost tribe of Manasseh and is flying them home to Israel. Their Identification as Manasseh’s descendants was finally verified through genetic studies.

When the Lord makes a promise, He keeps it. He has reason for every “delay,” which is not a delay on the divine schedule. More on delayed answers in Thought No. 36.

16. We cannot miss seeing throughout Scripture and in life’s experience that the primary, cosmic plot is Satan’s opposition to the Lord God. Theirs is the divine conflict. We are the Planet Earth’s visible actors, those who play its visible central role. One of us, the divine human, Jesus Christ, played and plays the pivotal role, best described in Isaiah 53.

17. When those times come, when we are wondering what is our part in this or that stressful group of humanity around us, consider how Jesus did it. He:

a. humbled Himself so we could be lifted up,

b. became a servant so we could become joint heirs with Him,

c. suffered rejection so that we could become His friends,

d. denied Himself so that we could receive all things, and

e. gave Himself so that He could bless us in every way.

If ever Jesus wondered, “What is the way through this, Father?” He was told something like the Spirit has told millions other of us, including Robert Frost [1874-1963], American poet, four-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize for poetry: “The best way out is always through.” Jesus did such a good job of following His Father that for all humanity He became The Way [to our Father]. He went through, not around. He went through, not drawing back.

18. When someone’s life is a mess and you want the Lord to intervene, do you have sort of a plan for your part of God’s action? It helps if first we are an approachable person, doesn’t it. [No question mark there. That’s a statement.] Make that “more than approachable;” such as being an “inviting” person.

Then, it helps a lot for the person to know that you are willing to set aside time for them; just them! Speaking the truth in love is essential, but has many faces such as from “you numbskull” to “poor, sweet you.” Then we have to offer them some of the divine wisdom we have gleamed by listening to the Lord for specific directions for them in their troubles. It helps to add what the results are to be, and how they are to respond to those results. Quick results from prophetic utterances are attention-getting.

God’s love can be revealed to them right there in their troubles, which may mean they are in one of His life-saving chastisements. You might go easy at first on trying to show them that their problems actually were God’s chastisements. They may not be able to see or appreciate that fact until things begin to work out as you predicted. But when God’s joy is restored in them you will more easily find fellowship with that person and can then reveal to them that their problems came from God’s love for them and that they have been the object of His fatherly attention. Next you will need to help them develop some better character and life’s practices.

Don’t forget that establishing or restoring their covenant with the Lord was what it was all about. They are now people with a future, prepared for the darkness and despondence that is coming upon the earth.

The above can be found in Hosea chapter 2, having to do with God’s impending judgment on the Northern Kingdom. They had great prosperity along with moral degeneration – it was the best and worst of times.

19. It is good for soldiers to know that they are already victors. That confidence is a definite advantage in war, even as some battles are lost and the tide of war is going against them. Christians are always in the victorious mode if we abide in the truth. Even though we lose some battles, we know that the war is already won. We may struggle, suffer, and temporarily lose some battles but the victory is assured even if we will not have the earth-life opportunity to be part of many earth-life victory marches. We will be in on the big one later as King Jesus and all His saints return to occupy the land.

We don’t have to wonder if we are on the winner’s side, and we know present situations for what they are. In 2 Kings 6:16 one of our spiritual ancestors had the full picture and is seen passing it on to the next generation. Today we are far down the line in that lineage and things have not changed. The truth is that we are surrounded with lots of world-level evil but we also have God’s hedge around us, so that nothing can touch us that does not meet with God’s eternal purposes for us.

20. Everything outside of the church is not bad, just like everything in the church is not good. The church has had its good effect even on those who have never darkened its doorways. That’s part of having been good leaven for the world. It is interesting to see what the world has done with that which the church has provided it. Leadership style, for example, is not entirely opposite from that found within the church.

It has been said that leadership is to provide direction, correction, protection, and the means of reproduction of the group. That sounds good to me because that is what the Head of the church does. What is not mentioned in the function of leadership is that creation’s best directions come from the Holy Spirit’s active participation in all of the churches’ activities, as He does His corrections, ongoing protection and reproductivity. The church is able to hear and follow His still, small voice while the world is minimally interested in things of the one true living God.

There is a real difference when anyone responds to the Spirit’s presence and activity. That’s where the world commonly fails and where the church can succeed, whether in its religious activities and ministries or outside of its temporal confines as a vital part of the world around the church. We can hear and follow the Spirit in His godly character and insightful decisions in our workplaces.

Faithful Christians in the workplace can change and have changed the world, even if the unbelieving world around them remains unbelieving.

21. I had often wondered to whom I should attribute the following quote. B. W. says it is by Rupertus Meldenius [1582-1651], medieval writer, educator, and Lutheran theologian. He is also known by at least a couple of other names, due to the possibility of losing one’s head by writing things that were not according to then-current church theology.

“On the essentials, unity; In necessariis unitas,

On the non-essentials, freedom; In dubiis libertas,

In everything, love.” In omnibus caritas.

The Latin translation is to show you that I can copy in almost any language.

22. No one can cause trouble more than can someone who has a self interest. It is amazing how one can work so diligently for a group when he has his own interest at heart. Watch for motives.

23. Why can anyone trust the Lord now, anytime, anywhere, and in any way? Does He really have everything under control, both of nations and in our personal lives and everywhere in between? Why should we trust Him to do what He said He will do? How and why:

a. There is no other way to live in full peace, faith and assurance, which is His will for us.

b. The Lord has never stepped outside human history or away from His creation. He is actively taking part in and ruling over this world.

c. He has determined the pre-appointed times and boundaries of all the nations – Acts 17:26.

d. He controls the leaders of nations – Ps. 21:1.

e. He is deeply involved in the life of every believer, even if we don’t know it – Phil. 2:13.

f. He even knows everything that is going on in us; our thoughts, emotions and wills, and our outward circumstances of life – Ps. 139; Acts 17:28.

g. He is “merely” acting according to His character [grace, compassion, slow to anger, great in mercy, good to all, and merciful to all of His works] – Ps. 145:8-9.

24. We are funny creatures, we humans, even when be become spiritual and righteous. Sometimes we push leadership on those who don’t really want it, sometimes to those who are not qualified, and sometimes to those who push forward to snatch it. I suppose that God’s choices of leaders can come from among any of those sources. Christian Nestell Bovee [1820-1904], American writer, member of the Saturday Evening Club of Boston [which included Washington Irving, Longfellow, Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and other such notables], noticed that, “We make way for the man who boldly pushes past us.” The pusher may be a bully or someone hearing the call of leadership. It’s important to recognize the difference in oneself and in others.

25. Don’t wrestle over your carnality; live heavenly. Don’t fret about your areas of darkness; live in the light that you already have. Don’t fear your approaching earth-death; live fully the schedule that you have been granted.

Those can be added to our definition of what it is to be an overcomer.

26. The nature of a kingdom reflects the character of its king. If the king is loving, so is his kingdom [meaning his subjects]. It the king is forgiving, so is his kingdom [meaning his subjects]. If the king is mean and immoral, so is his kingdom [meaning his subjects].

What a risk our King took when He made us His citizens! Those who are not of His kingdom look at His kingdom [us] and judge Him. If we had not been loved and forgiven by Him, we would not have to be loving and forgiving – but He did and we must, for His sake and the sake of His kingdom.

Isn’t it inconceivable to think of His being loving and forgiving, yet allow us to be otherwise without impunity or some sort of loss? Right. For example, will He forgive us without our forgiving others – Matt. 6:14-15? Right again.

Paul knew that if someone did not work when he could, he should not be fed – 2 Thess. 3:10. James knew that praying without action is dead – Jam. 2:14. So, when we pray for someone or something, we need to put actions behind our prayers, if possible, or we are just lazy kids who want the Lord to be like a doting rich uncle towards a lazy nephew – Luke 7:31-35. So He will not feed us or give us a piece of candy when we act that way.

We cannot fault God or otherwise diminish His veracity for not answering our prayers [John 15:7] when we are not being obedient and unresponsive.

27. “Motivation is simple; all you do is eliminate those who are not motivated” – Lou Holtz, living American football coach, sportscaster, author and speaker. Even the flesh has some powerful words. These by coach Holtz show one aspect of God’s character and behavior, an aspect that begraced believers tend to shy away from as long as is possible.

28. If a family went on a vacation together, and were together the entire vacation, and had a great time, would you expect to get a perfectly accurate and coordinated report from everyone? Not really. They would all agree on the major report that they had a great time, but would necessarily disagree on which day they got up early, or where they bought gasoline, and the like. The process would not be perfectly remembered or understood by each – but all would agree on the major thing, that they had a great vacation from beginning to end.

That’s the situation we have with the Book of the Revelation. There are lots of misunderstandings about the page-by-page process described therein, but the common agreement by all is that it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. That starts and is stated in chapter one, then the revelation processes until He is revealed in His glory in the end of the book. The events in between the beginning and the end are certainly important but only the Lord seems to understand those events perfectly.

The purpose of this revelation to John is to reveal the Suffering Servant as the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and the First and the Last. That primary purpose is accomplished despite our lack of both insight and agreements on the rest of the story.

29. It has long been questioned why the disciples did not immediately recognize their resurrected Rabbi on the road to Emmaus, but did recognize Him later after He blessed and broke their bread at meal – Luke 24:30-31. Then He vanished from them.

Let me add my understanding, which must have been the understanding of millions before me: We can see [believe in] Jesus, but after we are blessed [broken] by Him we recognize [see] Him [as He wants us to see Him]. Babes being blessed alone do not have the revelation of His discipleship; it may make us even more self-centered. But being broken by Him brings the revelation of how and who He is, which moves us onward.

30. Is Jesus the foundation of your life – Ps. 11:3; 1 Cor. 3:11. If He is, what does that mean to you? If He is not, what might you do about it? Is your foundation your job, income and bank account? It is the church? Is it your health? Is it Christ Himself? How do you know?

The best way to test a foundation is to stress it. If it crumbles, it is inadequate. Of all foundations, Jesus Christ is the only one who will not crumble. What has been the outcome of the testings of your foundations?

31. As an example for Thought 30, in Genesis 15:5 and 22:17 the Lord told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. We know that is a LOT of stars!! And then in Hebrews 11:12 it is said by the same Spirit that that promise has already been fulfilled. The best I can do with that at this setting is that God was either speaking of those stars visible to the human eye that Abraham could see, or that His promise has been fulfilled by faith. I’m not satisfied with either attempt.

32. This is a Thought for immature saints only, if any are present. You others can skip it because you won’t be able to identify with it. It’s on “hurt feelings and other soul pains” – those kid things.

Our human spirit gives us our physical life [Gen. 2:7; John 1:9] until it is replaced by the Holy Spirit when/if we are born again. Without one or the other we would be physically dead like a stillborn baby or someone shot to death. With only our human spirit we have certain but limited soul-abilities; including knowing that there is a creator-god who places requirements on us – Rom.1:18-32. But we cannot know [be intimately acquainted with] that God until we are born again, at which time God puts Himself [His own Holy Spirit] within us. With only a human spirit we are spiritually weak, subject to spiritualities, both evil ones and righteous ones. When we die this earth-death, our spirit returns to God from whence it had come.

Our soul lives forever. It is molded by and subject to our environment and [as we become able] by our own choices. Therefore, we can become very good or very evil when we have only our human spirit. The result of having the Holy Spirit within us is that we are freed from crippling things that had previously developed in our soul. With God’s Spirit in us we still have a choice, but we are both freed and empowered to make and to do God’s will under the direction of the Holy Spirit within.

Before we were born again into the family of our new Father in heaven, our soul was patterned in certain ways by our then-father, the devil. He had raised us but, praise the Lord, Christians were then adopted into the heavenly family. Soul changes can occur quickly or slowly, actually both. Christians can [as souls alive by the Holy Spirit] live according to the Holy Spirit [whisperings, directing, encouraging, convicting] or according to that which we learned and became in our old pre-born again souls. That is living in the flesh and according to our old nature.

Souls are said to have several aspects: Feelings, emotions, intellects, affections, attitudes, imaginations, memories, wills, and possibly more according to whom you ask. Feelings are conscious soul [not physical] sensations caused by stimuli. Helpful example: “How do you feel about your vacation?” vs. “What do you think about your vacation?” The first question requires use of our feelings; the second requires use of our intellect. Both require use of our memory. Emotions are states of mind which are controlled by our attitudes. Our intellect is our brain power, our truth warehouse, our mental capacity, having to do with knowing and understanding but is not our will [our willpower]. In our memory is stored our past as we know and interpret it. Our will is our conscious decider, the seat of our deliberate actions, our strength of purpose -- which may be weak or strong. See Thought No. 52 for attitudes.

Now to the soul and Christian soulishness. It has been noticed by some observers that when a person becomes a born again Christian he does not immediately become perfect in all respects. ☺ The reason: Although he has now been set free from being bound to the person and ways of his first father [the devil] and has been adopted into God’s family, he still has some of his old habits of soul. Old habits are unacceptable to our new Father, although the newly adopted son is always acceptable to his new Father and to the rest of the family. Time and experiences of living as a new person in his new family gives him the opportunity to abandon the old ways and adopt the new ways. The new Spirit within him enables him to live righteously in fellowship with God and man.

Then come such as:

1) Hurt feelings, which are old-family feelings designed by our old-father to bring about old-family actions. Our new Father designs those events to sharpen our intellect and strengthen our will. He has prepared us by informing us of the truth and giving us strength for righteousness. At that point we have been set free to make a choice – run, pout, fight or forgive, love, and stay united. HELPFUL NOTE: God does not get His feelings hurt; neither did Jesus. Facts and faith remind us that our Father is directing all things. Remember King Ahab in 1 Kings 21:1-4.

2) Disappointments, which are pre-conceived requirements we place on ourselves or on others, become failures in our expectations. If we are adequately informed, we may rightly expect good or bad of the person or event, and perhaps be surprised [but not unprepared in our soul] but not be caught in a bind when they/we fail. Disappointments tend to lower our opinions and lessen our love for the failed one and to further weaken the failed one when they know of our disappointment in them. HELPFUL NOTE: God is never disappointed; neither was Jesus who knew man’s nature and made allowances for us a part of His way of life. Jesus was ahead of Peter’s failure and was restoring him in advance. Remember General Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-12.

3) Situational depression is the taking upon oneself more of a burden than we should, or not carrying it properly. It is emotionally heavy when we take up God’s load in a matter or when we lose track of exactly Who is in total charge. HELPFUL NOTE: Jesus wept but His faith was not shaken. In the next breath [so to speak] He raised Lazarus from the dead – John 11:17-44. In Matthew 11:20-26 He was bothered by the failure of His recent ministry, but turned to His Father and said it was fine with Him however His Father wanted to do things.

4) Happiness is great, but it needs to be sought righteously and in accordance with quality character. Happiness comes and goes because it is most appreciated and sought after by the flesh – be it good or bad flesh. It may make us happy to get revenge on someone. We may mold our lives and lifestyles so to make us continually happy, an impossible feat. Happiness is shallow and fleeting, and often at others’ expense. [Joy is a different matter.] The word happy or some form of it is used 25 times in the KJV, and never by or about Jesus. Joy or some form of it is used about 250 times. HELPFUL NOTE: Joy may be thought of as that immovable pleasure placed by God in the faithful heart of one who lives for the Lord. Joy is strength for those who depend on the Lord. It may or may not be mixed with happiness. Joy was the Lord’s strength as He marched toward the cross, and He was not happy.

5) Contentment is to be sought after if it is godly. Being content with unrighteousness in one ’s self or in others is permissiveness. Contentment when the Lord wants us to move on can make us disobedient. It makes the soul very comfortable as things are.

Feelings and emotions are given us to enjoy if they are righteous, but not for us to live in. When we make decisions from them, we are often wrong, and always in the flesh. We can use them to inform our intellect and will, so that our intellect and will can make the right and informed decision in faith.

33. Serious Christians who are on track are [to use a modern term] “terrorist threats” to the world, to religionists, and to those Christians who want to lead a “normal” life and “get along” with everyone. That is what Paul was telling us in 2 Timothy 3:13 when he said, “All who desire to lead a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” ….

34. …. At the same time, the Lord is giving us grace for anything and all things to which He calls us. Persecution is not a Sunday picnic, so it is understandable that at times we might waver, becoming burdened, heavy-hearted, stressed, fearful, and you name it. At those times, living the gospel may not seem like good news in our flesh. But it is good news testimonially to those to whom the Lord is showing our faith and courage and success and steadfastness as they watch us in our trials. We are often the only ones who have confidence and a cool head in crises when others are panic-stricken.

Our King does not issue all of our metals for successful service while we are here in this earth-life. Without obvious victories and victory marches it is often necessary to listen for Jesus calling us “friend” or our Father calling us “son.” That will certainly satisfy us for this time.

35. I had never talked to this nurse before, but here we were on the phone enjoying a mixture of personal and professional conversation. She had read my medical record as supplied by my referring physician and was arranging an appointment for me. She had known my name and certain things about me. We were now scheduled to meet.

I thought about how that also describes us and the Lord. We had never talked to Him but had known some things about Him from others and through the Written Record. At the time and circumstances of His choosing, He scheduled an appointment for us to meet and be fixed.

I thought you might enjoy a little home-grown allegory.

36. It has been excellently said by many that the saint who knows and trusts the Lord, after he has presented his petition and unburdened his heart to the Lord, resigns himself to the faithfulness, goodness and wisdom of God. At that very common point he leaves the shaping of the answer to God’s sure mercy. Whatever way God chooses to answer, the believer will welcome it. That is a powerful position.

King David is our outstanding example here. He was much of a failure as father and husband – at least his failures in that area seem to have been magnified in the records rather than minimized by the Holy Spirit. One of his wives hated him; another’s husband had to be murdered before he could marry the pregnant widow who bore his baby; his son and heir-apparent was a rapist and fornicator within the family who eventually led a civil war against David. There were more examples.

His outstanding positive example in this Thought is found in 2 Samuel 23:3-4 [KJV] where David spoke of the Lord’s requirements for leadership in Israel, especially that which would follow his own reign. In verse 5 he said that his sons were not thusly qualified but that the Lord’s promise to him would stand. God’s promise was that one of David’s descendants would reign over Israel forever. Because of his own failure as a father, David did not know how God would work that out, but He trusted Him. He had His word.

The Lord always delivers on His promises. It’s good if we do not draw blueprints and set time-lines for Him to follow. At times He may answer along the line of our requests, or by a “No” and then provide wonderful grace that is better than if He had said “Yes.” The flesh disagrees with that statement and theological understanding.

37. As a disciple, John heard his Rabbi, Jesus, make many promises that were impossible to fulfill – if John was listening to someone who was only a man. But over the few years of their life together, John found it easier and easier to believe Him. At first, John knew he was hearing good words, then he witnessed good works, then John himself was speaking those words and doing those works, then his Rabbi began to do unimaginable things like raising dead folks to life. Jesus progressively proved Himself to John [and others] until, after John saw Him alive from the dead, he had a burst of knowledge and faith granted him through both experience and revelation.

One of the impossible promises his Rabbi gave was that God’s Spirit would lead them into all truth – John 16:13. At the time he first heard that promise, John must have thought Jesus really meant “will lead you into some things you don’t know yet, but lots of educated people already know” -- some watered-down understanding that would have been reasonable if simply a godly Rabbi had uttered it. John could not have known at that time [as a teenager] that he would know and do things by the Holy Spirit such as he eventually did before he died in his 90s, including those of the Revelation he received for inclusion in the last book of the Bible.

[NOTE: And I do not want to exclude the infinitely endless things in and of the Spirit that John and we will experience in the ages to come after we leave this present form of earth-life.]

But, lest we expectantly and joyfully focus on things as being that which Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would lead us into, let me enlarge our understanding. Jesus and His word are “the Truth.” The Holy Spirit leads us into everything of Jesus Himself, not just into things about Jesus. The whole of creation [which was created by Him and for Him] is being and will finally be placed perfectly into Jesus. We who are here now are experiencing only a bit of that final placement. We increase in that revelation [our being in Christ] while here, then launch into more of its fullness when we leave and go to where we will await our return to earth with Him, then launch greater again when we live with and in Him during His earthly reign, then launch into its currently absolutely unimaginable fullness when our Father comes out of heaven to reign with Jesus in our presence on the newly resurfaced Earth. In that process [supposing that that covers the last “launch”] we are not placed any more into Jesus than we are right now, but we are granted a more full revelation and experience of it. It all started with the gift of faith to first believe in and into Him. We are in the process of being led by the Holy Spirit further into Him.

38. Have you noticed [and I would bet that you have] that the Lord never frets over the power of His enemies, but does grieve over the sins, weaknesses, and resistances of His people? Likewise, neither should we complain of our enemies’ power.

39. The saint who cannot/will not rely on the Lord cannot be true to Him, at least not for long. If we do not trust Him, who remains to be trusted from among “the world [that’s stuff and others], the flesh [that’s us], and the devil?” Those other choices contend with the Lord. They cannot win.

40. Don’t live with the results of other peoples’ thinking, especially about you. Set your sights on that which the Lord gives you about you. If that is too spiritual for you, understand that you should “go for your highest desires.” On the way, noticed that thorns have roses.

Although some people have good insight and are encouragers, and elevate our poor visions of ourselves, this admonition is about the others who think little or less of us and would hinder our higher vision.

41. Saints who love their service for the Lord, who enjoy the results of their ministries, who ask nothing in return for giving Him their lives – are just like joggers. If you stop a jogger, he continues running in place. If you see that dedicated and anointed saint on vacation, at a party or out fishing he continues running in place. That which he is, that which possesses him, that to which he has dedicated himself – has become him [like Jesus was]. He is consumed by his calling [like Jesus was]. He has been transformed into that to which God called him [like Jesus was]. If he is at peace and continues to have an integrated human personality, he will jog both in place and along the path [like Jesus did].

42. When you counsel a married person, do you caution him/her to not break the covenant of honoring their mate by their revealing to you things that should be only between the two of them? Those two should honor marriage unity/oneness. Every topic may possibly be talked about, but not everything in each topic. Exception: When there is great stress or danger in the marriage and the other mate will not accept outside counsel.

43. G. K. Chesterton [1874-1936], British writer, poet, philosopher, and Christian apologist said, “Merely having an open mind is nothing; the object of opening the mind, as of opening the mouth, is to shut it again on something solid.” I have a pastor/brother who is of that quality.

44. Because Christians are Monarchists who are subject to a King and live in His kingdom, we are designed to have a clear mind in regards to the forces of this world, their activities and inactivities. Along that line of thinking, in the arena of politics, it can be said that the Democrat Party’s purpose is to go continually in the wrong direction while making mistakes and that of the Republican Party is to prevent the mistakes from being corrected.

45. Growth in the Spirit can be defined as having an abundance of the Spirit’s fruit – Gal. 5:22-24. Another way to say it is that we have more of Jesus and less of ourselves every day.

46. Yesterday I was asked if my 50 year old commitment to the Lord [all of me for all of Him] had ever been tested. I had to think on that. Eventually my answer was “No.” That commitment has never been tested. What has been tested is my commitment to personal righteousness and to spiritual growth and maturity. As best I understand, I have never consciously wavered on that constitutional agreement with the Lord, but there were times when briefly I wanted to write some amendments. The constitution stood, and stands.

47. There is absolutely nothing new in Christ. That which we would call new is simply that which we see for our first time. Kind Solomon said there is nothing new under the Sun. Likely, thousands and millions of other saints have seen our latest insight [had the revelation] before, and many of them applied it to their lives. Some were farmers and hunters, some doctors and engineers, and some wives and students. There is no end to the revelation available to us in every area of life. Revelation is not only religious in nature.

48. During the sad episode of the golden calf in the wilderness, Moses expressed God’s anger toward His people. That which they had done was beyond just making and worshiping the idol. They had unrestrained themselves, and did it in the sight of their enemies [who must have been watching them closely]. See Exodus 32:25-28. As a result, Moses called out of that sinful congregation those who would fulfill Luke 14:25-27. The Lord is still issuing that call. Do you know anyone, including yourself, who has answered?

49. How does this match with your experience? “As long as I have left open the possibility that I might go back to something the Lord has removed from me [or me from it], I continue to be tempted in that direction. When going back is no longer an option, going back is no longer a temptation.”

Compare yourself to the Israelites in the wilderness with Moses. As soon as the Lord had gotten them out of slavery in Egypt [and eventually gotten slavery in Egypt out of them], they moved ahead, together, in order, and under direction of God’s chosen leader.

50. From time to time over the years I have noticed something in certain people. I have called that something “understanding.” It is not based on education or intelligence, although those things can enhance “understanding” as easily as they can decrease “understanding.” It is an indication that that person’s mind has its previously gained knowledge well-coordinated, is easily explainable, and is not fearful of being challenged.

I noticed that when I talked to such a person, whether he/she was one-on-one with me or was one of a group, that that which I said made quick sense to them; it just fit into their minds without any apparent delay or problem. It was like revelation, except revelation is like a light being turned on, into simply a truth accepted. The new thought or information simply fit into that one’s memory bank easily and quickly and was ready for immediate use. The term “integrated mind/soul” comes to mind.

I have often described that person as one who has “understanding.” It is to the mind as physical gracefulness is to the body. It is grasped by reason. It is coordinated. As new ideas and information are added the whole continues to flow gracefully.

51. As I told a burdened beloved, “Our lives and problems are like the world – round. Today it may seem like we are at the end but it may be only the beginning.”

52. I have a good brother in the Lord who is a local Christian leader and a godly, reliable man. The one weakness that I have seen functioning in him [to be able to say that is a real compliment] is in one of his attitudes. I have talked to him about his obvious flaw but he does not see it. Both of us are peaceful about his not seeing it.

As with all of us, our attitudes control our thoughts and actions, and thus our lives. They are secret powers that are on the job 24 hours every day, for good or for bad. That’s a big presence, is it not?

According to many authorities, including Scripture, it is important that we come to know ourselves, including through listening to others who know and love us, and learn to recognize and harness and possess our souls. See 2 Samuel 12 about David being helped to know himself. I know of no woman who, when told that her slip was showing, would ignore that bit of information because she thought she already knew better. It’s the same with areas of our soul, including our attitudes.

Peter [2 Peter 1:5-9] taught us by the Spirit that knowledge about our souls would lead us to self-control, godliness and a lot of other good things, resulting in usefulness and fruitfulness. That’s what I want for my brother. As usual, his success in this matter may start with the Lord first having His way with me in some key way. God is good.

53. An African proverb says, “If you want to go fast, walk alone; if you want to go far, walk together.” I have been guilty of taking the shortcut by “doing it myself,” when it should have been a joint project. It may have been doing a little project with a small son, or an adult project that would have been better for the kingdom if another group had been asked to do it with my group. Loners can be outstanding by doing it their way in their time, while groupies can be just part of a successful group who did it together.

54. Watch your prayers for the tendency of always seeking blessings instead of the Blessed One; of asking for a touch, instead of asking for the One Who Touches; of asking for healings instead of asking for the Healer; of asking for redemptions from life’s failures instead of asking for the Redeemer; of asking for salvations from troubles instead of asking for the Savior. In other words, He supplies our needs but He is our greatest need. As we diminish ourselves by walking the way of the cross, He increases in us. All of those needs and trials are to help us find our way. They work for good in the souls of those who love Him and are called to be like Him.

World events, both naturally and spiritually, are coming to a head. Look up!