THOUGHTS OF OCTOBER, 2012

1. God’s promises never fail, although our flesh fears they will, and sometimes they do appear to have failed. When we trust the Lord for something that is differently on His agenda, we tend to think He has failed us, that He is not trustworthy, and that His word is not true. All of that sort of thinking and interpreting of God’s “lack of support” is obviously self-centered on our part, and shows that we are more interested in our selves than in the Lord Himself. Actually, those times point to our lack of abiding in Him and in His word.

Why are His promises infallible? Because they are implemented by faith. Faith means more than an agreement with the Bible, and more than a group’s agreement with the Bible, and more than finding a verse that seems to apply to a present situation. Faith in the Lord and in whatever He has said means that we will take action to lay our life down on what He has said. Then, if that which was mistakenly understood to be His word fails, you fail – reputationally, financially, etc. Faith means that we and our stuff depend upon the faithfulness of God and His ability to get His word to us accurately enough for us to cooperate with Him.

His word depends upon Him and His faithfulness, not on us. That which He puts into our minds and hands for entrance into faithful service then bears our fingerprints also.

2. We are saved completely – not only by 1) Christ’s work on the cross but 2) because of His 3 years of perfect faithfulness and 3) because He always intercedes for us – Heb. 7:25. Our full salvation does not depend on us, but on a God who is touched by our human infirmities – Heb. 4:15. It is reassuring to me that my salvation began and ends with Jesus, and that His deepest desire is for me to enter into the fullness of His glory with Him. That motivates me to follow Him into becoming an overcomer, by which He will get that which He desires from humanity.

3. Proverb 13:12 says that unbelief makes the heart sick. The cure for a sick heart comes by our embracing the Lord’s ultimate purpose – our inheritance in Christ, which will come about in the coming millennium. As the proverb said, “focusing on temporal solutions causes despair.” Focusing on God’s eternal plan [our destiny] carries us through. That’s why the Lord gave us the information of our future, and the tool call “faith” to grasp it and put it to proper use now.

4. If you are running short on things to pray about, consider this: In the USA suicides now outnumber traffic fatalities.

5. Reasons being given for the demise of religious institutions [Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Catholic, to name the largest] are, 1) the loss of confidence in the message of the gospel in the face of secular social science, 2) efforts to get up to par in order to be relevant to what is going on in our culture, 3) not wanting to alienate anyone by promoting an exclusive gospel, 4) not wanting to alienate anyone by promoting a religion, 5) an increased reliance on liberal political means for changing society, and 6) weakness in regards to combating hostility to biblical family, church and social order. It seems to me that reason no. 1 covers all 5.

When the church is strong enough to promote a respect for the Lord and for the beings who were created in His image, the culture is stable and healthy. When the church’s core values are secularized, the culture will likewise change. When the church is without a living hope, society will have a diminished hope, meaning that the poor will not expect to be able to raise themselves out of poverty, the prosperous will not invest, and the rich will keep their riches to themselves. In that slide into social poverty is lost the work ethic, honesty, temperance, a sense of responsibility, and other virtues that otherwise would enable individuals to thrive and society to remain strong.

It is easier to fall into poverty [of all sorts] than it is to climb up to success [of all sorts].

6. I understand that when a Scotsman serves a cup of tea he/she includes a cookie. When an Englishman serves a cup of tea he/she serves the tea alone. Thus, in Scotland, if someone serves you tea and neglects to add the cookie, you most likely will hear the comment, “This is an English cup of tea.” That from B.W., a Scotsman.

7. Integrity: “A strict consistency between thoughts, words, and actions.”

8. “The steps of a good man are ordered [arranged, assured – ed.] by the Lord, and He delights in his way” – Ps. 37:23. For that to be true [and it is], the opposite also must be true, that the steps of a bad man are not ordered by the Lord, and He does not delight in his way. That is obvious, but my central Thought here is that nowhere does the Lord say, “I have brought you this far. Now you are on your own.”

9. So, when you approach or are into your next trial, remember God’s highest purpose for leading you there. He wants you! He loves you and has planned the best – to His glory and our eternal betterment, no matter what the temporal/earthly/natural results. He loves you and does not want you to fail. He will supply all of your needs for the purpose that He brought you to that place. He might plan a temporal failure, if that is what He or we need, but not a spiritual failure.

10. God bless John Wayne. He was and is still an encouragement for us to stand up, speak up and live up. He was a gentleman in his personal life, not only on the screen. The result of being Christianized is a good character, partly shown by John Wayne’s personal and public display. However, there is an additional ingredient of that Christian personality – being consciously led by the Holy Spirit.

It is good to have that foundational nature displayed by John, but it can lead to simple carnality if the Lord is not accorded continual access to our souls, so that we can relate to Him as children to a father. An example of a John Wayne personality without an alive and ongoing contact with the Lord is the “self-made” man, who is therefore understandably highly critical of anyone who cannot also pull himself up by his own bootstraps.

11. Men having sex with men account for only 2% of the U. S. population, but 61% of new HIV cases [2009 is the latest year for these statistics] and 79% of new cases worldwide.

Homosexual practices are perversions of normal male-female sexual acts. It is so obviously deviant from normal heterosexual sexual activity that the Lord holds homosexuals responsible for their actions even if they do not know what the Bible says – Rom. 1:18-32. Spiritually, it is no worse than other sins. However, greater consequences result from twisting the truth into a convenient lie. In the natural, homosexual practices spread many diseases and results in death for those who practice homosexuality, plus of innocents.

Other types of fornication are also sins. They also spread many diseases and can result in death for those who practice them, plus of innocents.

Unsafe driving is also a sin. It causes many injuries and can result in death for those who practice it, plus of innocents.

Etc. sins cause injuries, disease and death for those who practice them, plus of innocents.

The Thought here is that God is good and He loves us. For our sakes He has charted a course for life and health and happiness and has given us both a helpful handbook and a Guide to lead and strengthen us in the way of that life, health and happiness.

12. It has been observed that, gradually, we are getting rid of [some of] the cultural aspects of our Christianity, and are moving toward the essence of Christ and what He is now doing. That process allows us to step over crumbled barriers/walls that had been keeping us from loving in a brotherly way, and to engage as true brothers should.

As I have said many times, crossing over those crumbled walls does not require changing any names on our church buildings or even changing any of our theologies. It is a work of the heart.

The Lord is able to divide between the true and untrue things that need dividing, and unite [make sense of] those who need uniting – Heb. 4:12-13.

13. When the cross walk aspect of the gospel is taught, our words are sustained by the Holy Spirit. We have testimony – the testimony of the living Christ with and among us. When we teach other than our and Jesus’ crosses, whom do we suppose will sustain our words in the hearers? Remember that there is one who will support anti-Christian life.

When we advise our learners to take other Christians to court, rather than be defrauded, whom do we suppose will sustain our words in our students/children – 1 Cor. 6:1-11?

The way of the cross is difficult on the flesh, but results in real life here in this life, and great rewards in the hereafter. It also pleases the One who gave His life for us so that we could and would follow Him.

14. It is a delight to be able to trust certain speakers and writers so that you don’t have to be too actively on guard filtering out the questionable in regards to the truth. To that end, it is worth our time and effort to search out seasoned men, of good repute, who love the Lord with all their hearts – and listen to/read them. They willingly and carefully share the grace of God, allowing it to flow freely through them to us.

15. We need to be peacefully and frequently challenged [it also happens unrighteously] so that, if necessary, we will stop and evaluate our lives and service as to where we are and where we should be. If we have active, close, daily relationships with peers, there is little chance that something major will come roaring into our lives and throw us into a pit. My Corpus Christi brothers don’t know how much they continually challenge me to evaluate my walk. They are loving and quality brothers whom I know can see me [mostly] as I am, and will take action as needed.

16. While reading my Bible today I was especially blessed and “spoken to” by Proverb 2:8 [justice] and Proverb 3:3-4 [kindness and truth]. Good things simply must be shared with others. Enjoy.

17. “The great pillars of all government and of social life are virtue, morality and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible” – Patrick Henry, Patriot leader in the American Revolution, governor of Virginia. That is a great group of pillars. Every one of us could have picked 3 equally good ones, and perhaps have put religion first, but virtue, morality and religion are great indeed. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, and the people whom He has chosen as His own inheritance” – Ps. 33:12.

18. Here is a note of interest to brothers, both Catholic and Protestant. The percent of Protestants in the United States has dropped to 48%, down from 66% a few years ago. It is not due to the rise of Catholicism, but to a significant increase of Non-denominationals. It appears that folks are dissatisfied with traditional denominations. Evaluate that yourselves.

19. Daniel Webster, Christian leader, U. S. Senator, Secretary of State, known as “the defender of the Constitution” said, “Let the religious element in man’s nature be neglected -- let him be influenced by no higher motives than self-interest, and subjected to no stronger restraint than that of civil authority – and he becomes the creature of selfish passion or blind fanaticism.”

That compares to Paul’s words in Romans 10:3: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.”

20. “I know that my Redeemer liveth … I am not interested in science or anything else that leaves God out of it.” That was said by George Washington Carver, an American scientist who had been a slave. An important reminder of his scientific approach is that he was first grabbed by the Lord, then followed Him into science and into hundreds of discoveries, principally related to nutrition. Perhaps he was encouraged by what Paul wrote in Colossians 2:2-3.

21. One of our readers who is currently on a full-time assignment to a prison ministry, and will be for 4 years unless he gets an early release from the Head of his ministry, has taught us a good lesson: “Don’t suppose negative things with a negative attitude.” In language courses, a double negative makes a positive, but in life courses a double negative makes a quadruple negative.

The story: He filled out a form, thinking he was making a list of those who could visit him – but, unknown to him, the list he completed was not for that purpose. Then he waited and waited, but no one visited. He had no money for stamps or stationery. In two weeks, he and his wife had imagined all sorts of negative things about the other. The worst was imagined and planned.

You know the ending. The mistake was found, the correct list was completed, and all was again well. But, that event showed a weakness of character, did it not? It is fine to consider that someone has done something offensive, if the attitude is clean, but the clean attitude will not take the offence the wrong way and magnify the problem.

22. Have you had the problem lately of someone giving you a gift that you did not want, even after you [at least] thought you had expressed your likes and dislikes? Why don’t people get you gifts you like? Here are some possibilities:

1) Let’s give some the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they did not know what you wanted. They may have been “out to lunch” when you were hinting at or telling them what you wanted, did not want, or needed.

2) Some of your friends may be at least a bit passive-aggressive in their behavior. If so, use some reverse psychology on them. Tell them you want that which you really don’t want, and that you don’t want that which you really do want. Then act disappointed when you get the ideal gift. [If you are attracted to this method, don’t do it. If you don’t like it, you are probably righteous enough to use it.]

3) They may be giving you what they like. If that is what you perceive has happened, on their next birthday give it back to them.

4) Some people just want to do their own thing, despite being told clearly what they should give. With those, you have to take what comes, or choose friends with tastes identical to yours.

I wish you the best there, but before we leave this Thought, you might ask the Lord why you don’t give Him what He wants, although He has told you exactly what He wants. I did that before I could write this Thought.

23. When things got tough during the American Revolution against King George, “everyone” was praying while others took action. John Hancock had this advice for the young nation’s leaders, and for all who were praying for the revolution: “I urge you by all that is dear, by all that is honorable, by all that is sacred, not only that ye pray but that ye act.” I suppose that he learned that from the Lord’s half-brother, James [2:14-20], and at the school of necessity.

It is interesting that James did not call himself the brother or half-brother of Jesus, but His servant. It is thought that this James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem after first thinking that Jesus was emotionally disturbed when He first entered His ministry – Mark 3:20-35.

Then, another writer of a New Testament letter, Jude, called himself the brother of James and the servant of Jesus. My Thought here is that they did not promote themselves as being the Messiah’s brothers, but instead stayed away from any appearance of pride or self-promotion – as true as their half-brother relationships with Jesus would have been.

Some truths we should let speak for themselves. We don’t have to pull them out of our armamentarium and use them for our personal benefit.

24. The real enemies of Islam seem to be:

1) Their wrong identity of God. In fact, all of their following problems stem from this one.

2) Dictators who suppress their own people.

3) Corruption.

4) Lack of education, of both sexes.

5) Lack of freedom, of all types.

25. I don’t know about each of you, but when I became the father of 5 sons I did not have a set of parenting goals or a plan to accomplish them. The best I can recall is that I went from day to day expecting the right things to be done. That’s the way I was raised on the farm, where it was fairly easy to do the right thing in a sheltered, well-molded environment.

But, if you need some parenting goals, or grand-parenting goals, here are some for beginners:

1) Keep your eyes open. That’s pre-crisis thinking. Act early while the twig is bendable.

2) Teach relationship-developing. That means you are equipping them to create their own life’s environments. There are few [?] complaints when we make and develop our own friends.

3) Work on their social skills, not just on their academics and being good. Include here their ability to put themselves in other’s shoes. That develops understanding attitudes and avoids making problems bigger.

4) Develop their independent thinking and acting. They need what this will create -- self-esteem -- so they will be ready to think and act against the flow of their peers. You know you are making progress when they use this skill on you, hopefully in a non-rebellious way. When they are doing it right, give them plenty of room.

5) Communicate. Especially communicate your unconditional love. That will make you their magnet in the future, especially when they know they have messed up.

Add to this list the things that the Lord has taught you and wants you to apply to you own “disciples.”

26. Felix Baumgartner broke the sound barrier when he jumped from a helium balloon 128,100 feet in the air. He attained the speed of 833.9 mph, or mach 1.24. His [and others’] project was 5 years in the making; involved 300 people including scientists, doctors and engineers; and it worked.

There are some outstanding lessons to be learned from F. B. and his team: 1) When something is important enough to us, we are capable of tremendous commitment. 2) Others are inspired by a person of vision and commitment. 3) It is essential that each member of a project be clearly focused on the goal. 4) Individual commitments are vital [Joe Kittinger, a team member, already held the world record for the highest jump but he fulfilled a vital role in the project and voluntarily lost being the record holder.]. 5) Members as a team can do more than individual members. 6) Pray, as F. B. did during his ascent. 7) Plan on coming home, although your full attention is on the “now.”

27. Abraham had to be “broken” before he was qualified to be the Father of Faith. Moses had to be broken before he was qualified to lead God’s people from slavery to freedom. Peter had to be broken and weeping over his betrayal of Jesus before he was able to receive Life and Power. The alabaster box had to be broken before its contents could be properly available to Jesus.

The hard ground, growing weeds, has to be broken up before it can receive the seeds, the clouds have to be broken before the rain can come, the grain must be crushed before it can be made into bread, and the bread must be broken [whether it was Jesus or is us] before humanity can be nourished into health and Life. Your brokenness may be because of a dear one’s rebellion and self-destructive actions, or the loss of a beloved, or the emptiness of your life. Whatever your condition, if you are broken He will now put you together to fit His purposes. Ready?

28. An excellent brother, a pastor, and a leader in God’s work in Corpus Christi states that he and his wife got married “in a fever.” After two years she had to tell him to give her Christmas and birthday gifts other than negligees. He is more normal than his religious C-V would seem to indicate.

29. The Manifesto of the Reformers: Sola Fide [by faith alone], Sola Gratia [by grace alone], Sola Scriptura [on the Word alone], Solus Christus [because of Christ alone], and Soli Deo Gloria [to the glory of God alone]. If you will, join me in asking the Lord to make that so in my/your soul, and then applying ourselves to living that Manifesto.

30. Do you “fit in” with the music in your church? If you do or don’t, do you consider your position to be due to your personal religious preference, generation, denomination, etc.? Or perhaps you have already considered your position spiritually? Is there place for judging religious music by its gracefulness, peace, Christ-focus, praise, and worshipful quality? Is the Lord served in the music and singing of your church, or is it person-centered and consumer-driven? Is it designed to help us “feel” a certain way, or to make the Lord “feel” a certain way [pleased, worshiped]?

31. I think that among the general population this would fall mostly on deaf ears, partly because many would consider it a political statement, but you have ears to hear. So here goes: Christians must vote for honest men and women; for those who consistently take Christian positions – whether those politicians are Christian or not. That’s it.

There are those who are, or say they are, Christians yet they vote and thus promote pro-abortion, pro-homosexual, pro-same sex marriage, etc. pro-unrighteousness agendas. Christians have been exceedingly guilty in this matter. As a result, those agendas have enlarged immorality in the land, and we are in danger of getting kicked out of the land. Removal from the land need not be like the Lord’s removal of Israel from the Promised Land, but may be removal of the last traces of righteousness from leadership, or removal of the last vestiges of righteousness from society – while perhaps a remnant remains in place.

I would want every person in the world to be a Christian. Short of that, I would at least want all Christians to be Christianized [meaning behaving like they were Christians]. In politics we [Christian voters] act like God does not see us when we vote. But He does see, and will bless or curse this land according to the course we take, including in politics.

Vote biblically. The righteous person walks [including votes] in his integrity; [so that] his children are blessed after him. – Prov. 20:7

32. “An unjust man will be an abomination to the righteous, and he who is upright in the way will be an abomination to the wicked.” – Prov. 29:27. It appears that we are again being allowed to make our own tough choices.

33. It seems appropriate that we close THOUGHTS this month with a Thought about timing – both God’s and man’s. It seems that many things that are inevitable just drag along and almost never happen, but that the inevitable do happen. A good example of this is the Lord Jesus’ return. When He departed, faithful ones expected Him to return on the morrow. He didn’t, but faithful ones have continued expecting Him daily for 2,000 years. His return is inevitable but has been delayed so long that some cease believing His promise.

A delayed timing of man’s doing is going on in regards to Israel’s soon attack on Iran, especially on Iran’s nuclear facilities. The decision to destroy them has been made, and published throughout the world. Everyone knows it will happen. In fact, it was scheduled to happen 8 months ago but was postponed at the last minute because Iran redirected part of its enriched uranium to civilian uses. The current decision is that Iran will have to be dealt with militarily next year [2013]. The word is that “Iran without nuclear weapons will be easier to deal with than Iran with nuclear weapons.”

Patience is the condition in which we lay hold of and possess our selves [souls] – Luke 21:19.