THOUGHTS OF FEBRUARY, 2013

1. Sitting here in this hotel room, getting my neck’s daily dose of radiation every 6:20 a. m. at the world’s top-ranked cancer hospital, the Lord showed me something through Jeremiah chapter 6. The people of Israel’s countryside were agrarian – farmers and keepers of various animals. Ordinarily, they ranged far and wide in the land, foraging for food and water, except when the enemy was approaching. At those times of obvious danger they drew near to Jerusalem and other cities for safety. Their leaders, cities and nation were failing and about to come apart, yet everyone was turning to those very institutions for leadership, protection and succor.

I see our institutions, America’s and the world’s, failing and about to come apart, yet “everyone” turning to those very institutions for succor. Our national government is anti-Christian and has taken measures “against God” for this latter half of my lifetime. Yet, the people continue to “flow into Jerusalem” for leadership, protection and succor – legal protection and approval of perverse life-styles, medical care, food, housing, and other needs of daily life. That will end.

Saints, the shadows of the evening are lengthening. Whatever we are going to do must be done quickly because the church’s assignment will soon be fulfilled and we will be gone. The coming darkness will be dense, but fools will plunge ahead, being accustomed to walking boldly in darkness. Jesus said, “Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes” – John 12:35. That which Jesus said to Judas can be applied to the righteous, “Whatever you will do, do quickly.”

If there is something about a relationship or your soul that is not ready to be presented to the Lord, do something about it now.

2. Here is a little encouragement for you: Have you wondered how in-depth your godly love has been lately? Consider whether it has been unconditional, had no expectation of being returned, was one-sided, whether it set others free to relate to you as they were inclined and able, and whether it was unearned.

On the other hand, some stranger currently reading over your shoulder may instead want to check out the level of his/her limited, human love: Has it been based on what your circumstances were, how others responded to you, and what you thought, felt and desired?

Join me in the repentance closet. There has been one person who seems to have spent more time there than you or me. His name is Paul, Saul of Tarsus, the self-labeled chiefest of sinners. His “trouble” was that he was full of Holy Spirit insightfulness, meaning he perceived both the wonderfulness of God’s love and the sin of his own flesh. As soon as he saw his sin, he went to the Lord for forgiveness, cleansing and changing.

We need have no spots on our white garments when we appear before Him on that glorious day.

3. Recently I sat down at this computer and wrote a page on the qualifications for leadership, based on my experience and my understanding of Scripture. Briefly stated, a Christian leader should: 1) Have a commitment to follow-ship himself, 2) Have necessary training, 3) Be confident in God’s calling to the task, 4) Be anointed by the Holy Spirit, 5) Be sent to the task by the church and the Holy Spirit, and 6) Accept the responsibility for maintaining the brotherhood of the saints, meaning as individuals and as a structural member/pillar of the church.

Then I listed a couple of characteristics of good leaders: 1) An open and hospitable life, as opposed to a hidden or secluded personality and life style, 2) Promoter of freedom in Christ and the fellowship of His saints, and 3) Has been “there” before or, [lacking that] having vision and commitment for getting there now.

Two good examples of leadership are found in 1 Samuel. Saul was ill-prepared and did not know what to do with the responsibility that had been given him. He suddenly found himself a king. Therefore, he depended heavily on his limited human ability to lead God’s people. On the other hand, David was well-prepared [but “only” in his godly character] to do that necessary to attract and lead God’s people. He knew his human weakness and depended upon the Lord. Remember 2 Corinthians 12:9.

4. Forty percent of all abortions in America are on young Christian women who are active in their churches. Ya Basta!

5. Every Christian is scheduled to appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ. God has designed that encounter to be one of the most joyful occurrences imaginable! Our unforgiven sins [of which there should be NONE] will be revealed and proclaimed. Because of them we will suffer loss in the hereafter.

But that’s not the end of the Judgment Seat story. It becomes unbelievably wonderful. There will be those present who will have been ‘fessed up when they departed the earth. They will have not necessarily lived a better life than those of the first group, but they were accustomed to being penitent and being bathed in God’s and man’s forgiveness. That is the righteous Christian’s lifestyle.

Saints, the Lord has set up that second situation, in which He desires to say to as many of us as possible: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into My glory.” For us to hear those words, we have to be clean.

By “clean” I mean no spots currently on our white robes. I do not mean a person who has never sinned, or has sinned only a bit, or has sinned less than most others. Because we all sin, we must live humble lives in which the Holy Spirit can easily touch us with conviction so as to move us to repentance and confession, resulting in “no spots.” That’s the way to live. It prepares us for that “Well done.” The Lord wants that more than we do.

6. On the night of their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites and all others had to smear the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the doorpost of their house or else the death plague would strike their house. That compares to Jesus’ blood being applied to our hearts, resulting in eternal life now and forever instead of death.

The Israelites also had to roast [not boil] that lamb and eat it. The lamb had to be passed through the fire, indicating the fiery trials Jesus suffered as the Lamb of God. Their eating of the roasted lamb tells us that we all shared in causing His death, out of which comes life for the believer.

But that’s not all. All leaven had to be removed from the house. Perhaps that is where we fall short after having been saved by the Lamb. Their removal of all leaven indicates the necessity of our being serious about overcoming sin in our lives. That takes humble diligence, does it not? Those Israelite women searched diligently for any leaven, and removed it.

If we want to have confidence re: the coming day of our judgment, and not shrink away from Him in shame, we can snuggle up to Him now. That means “abide.” See 1 John 2:28 and 4:17.

7. Said again from January: Unbelief among God’s people is worse than willful, conscious disobedience because willful, conscious disobedience is commonly wrapped in faith, although not obviously. It knows the truth and the consequences, and their pronouncements by a living God. That requires faith, even though it abides in someone who is acting unrighteously; someone who is willing to suffer God’s judgment for a willful act of sin. See Jonah’s willful disobedience, which was immersed in faith [but not in faithfulness].

On the other hand, read Hebrews 3 and 4 to see what the Lord thinks and does about unbelief among His people. His people are you and me.

8. That which is being called “epigenetics” is turning science upside down and in all other possible directions. Epigenetics is the name being given to the changes causable in inheritable characteristics that are brought on by environmental, social, cultural, weather, religious, dietary, etc. factors [over hours, days, months, years – all very short times!], but without changes in genes! It is possible to change an “environment” so that “offspring” will be different, without changing their genes. Epigenetics. Look it up.

9. Religious things are not the only areas where some just don’t get it – meaning simple truths. In the area of economics, some just do not see how the market economy relates to human well-being. For the market economy to work it is foundational that commerce and civility go together. Those who don’t get it believe that controls, regulation, taxes and impositions can make society more fair, just, and moral. Some even say that it will make things more Christian. That is anti-market and anti-Christian thinking.

Anti-market thinking believes that the major motive of businesses is greed. It’s hard to change the mind of someone who has accepted the greed seed of discontent. It is paranoid, suspicious, angry, divisive, hateful, and greedy. Yes, greedy. That which we attribute in judgment of others is that which is at work in us. Unrighteous judgment thus reveals the condition of our own souls.

Certainly, businessmen have human frailties, too, but any businessman who brings greed into the marketplace has already destroyed himself. Service to customers is that which attracts both customers and good employees and leads the way to success. Myriads of market factors contribute to success when service is foremost. Then money comes in. Money is certainly not an afterthought. It is the balance sheet that disciplines the business and gives signs of success or failure.

10. The church can trap itself when it begins to think and act like politics is the solution to our problems. The Kingdom of God is not brought about by politics, although politics can be a setting for a manifestation of the Kingdom. But if we see politics as our solution, we concede to humanists of many forms that the state is god.

11. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, not in our heads. God gives us a new heart and we begin to participate in the changing of our minds. Heart religion is alive to Jesus by the Holy Spirit; head religion is alive to anything else by whatever means at hand.

12. Desire the Lord Holy Spirit more than His gifts. Desire to be filled with Him more than with His power. Desire purity more than popularity. Desire the power of the Holy Spirit more than personality and polish. Prepare yourself more than you prepare your sermon. Desire to please the Head of the church more than you desire to please the church.

13. As we humble ourselves, the Lord lifts [exalts] us up – Matt. 23:12. He gives grace to the humble, and that at the proper time – 1 Pet. 5:5-6. Humility is a stairway up – one on which the humble may lead repentant sinners to the bosom of God.

14. What happens in you when you remember that you are commanded to be perfect like your Father in heaven is perfect – Matt. 5:48? Or, when you remember that you are to be holy because Jesus is holy – 1 Pet. 1:15? In my earlier days, I tried harder to be perfect and holy and was met with very limited success. How have your efforts paid off?

Then I saw that it was a matter of faith; that I was/am in Christ, and that He is perfect and holy. That’s not the end of the story, because I had to see my failure to make myself better [the purpose of the Law], and learn from Him the purpose of faith. I found myself in Christ. His perfection and holiness became my perfection and holiness. The root is holy, so the branches are holy – Rom. 11:16. Jesus said He is the vine and we are the branches – John 15:5. Because we are in Christ, we are made holy because He is holy. Any functional righteousness accomplished during our lives as born again Christians is accomplished by faith.

However, our Father recognizes only one man as being holy – His Son Jesus the Christ. Just as Adam represents every human in him to God as being unholy, Jesus represents every believer in Him to God as being holy. There are no other choices. All have been wrapped up in Adam and presented to God as sinners, and believers in Jesus have been wrapped up in Jesus and presented to God as holy. We have been reconciled to God through Jesus’ work on the cross where he took upon himself the sin of the world. Then he took our sin with Him to hell and left it there. He came forth as a new man, and we came with Him, through faith. All of that was God’s idea, or it never would have been efficacious. We would never have become holy apart from our redemption by Jesus.

Jesus stands before our Father in perfect holiness. We stand before our Father without any merit or claims of our own. We have our righteousnesses [deeds], but no righteousness [holiness] of our own. Both are by the grace of Christ Jesus.

You already knew all of that, didn’t you! No wonder it is called the Good news, or Gospel.

15. The Lord has granted the Jews great wisdom. Albert Einstein said: “If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal. Not to people or things.” How right he was, in the natural. However, the Jews have lacked faith in the Lord at certain vital times [not all of them, but most]. The more outstanding times that come to my mind are 1) in the wilderness with Moses, 2) In the Promised Land [often], and 3) when their Messiah came to them.

16. It has occurred to me, as it has to you, that the Lord calls us beyond ourselves but not beyond Himself. While following Him, things can get out of control [out of our control, that is]. We don’t have the mental, physical, financial, emotional, etc. ability to handle the situation. That’s the point where we can decide a new direction is in the making, a new adventure is at hand, a grand opportunity has arisen and the Lord is directing and providing – or, we can decide it is too much for us, is beyond us, or is not our calling at all.

When we have fantastic and almost unimaginable options, like had Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, we can go forward or run off to the hills. We can move forward in our own strength and wisdom, for 12 years like Abraham did with Hagar and for 40 years like Moses did after trying to deliver Israel, or we can walk ahead with the Lord, allowing Him to fulfill our purpose in His plan.

When we don’t have options, when there is no choice, there does remain one option/choice. We can move ahead trusting Him or can set our souls on fear and insecurity. Sometimes our highest calling is to do nothing but trust Him. In those situations, the Heavenly Architect has not made a mistake. He is still on course and is asking us to join Him, not His project.

16. Pope Benedict has resigned. It seems that he has a good mind [no remarkable dementia] but that his body is failing him. No particular diagnosis has been announced, to my knowledge. He is only in his 80s. He has decided to live in the Vatican, which is a nation politically and legally. That not only gives him security and privacy, a God-send to any declining person, but also gives him legal protection from any attempt to prosecute him in connection with sexual abuse cases from around the world. He has been named as a defendant [for not taking action] in law suits from his days as a cardinal and as Pope. I wish him peace, righteousness and a long life.

For those who are into watching for the next Pope, Pope Benedict’s resignation brings up the question of who he will be. In Roman Catholic circles many are expecting the next Pope to be “the last Pope.” For 800 years, St. Malachy’s prophecy has pointed to this time, describing in order each Pope and at least one of each Pope’s personal characteristics, acts or occurrences. He is called Petrus Romanus – Peter the Roman. During his reign will come the destruction of Rome, said St. Malachy and say his believers.

We shall see what we shall see, as said my Grandmother Eckert. You might enjoy googling-up St. Malachy.

17. It is a blessing to note that Brother Andrew, in an interview with *The Christian Post,* is not praying for relief of Christian persecution around the word, especially in Moslem countries. His prayers are for God to use the persecution to purify the church. In those countries the church is stronger in faith and righteousness than in countries where there is no persecution. The light of Christ shines brightest in the greatest darkness.

Here in our politically free nations, in which ways are we free? We have Bibles galore, so read them galore. We have freedom to meet with other believers, so meet frequently. We can speak up for others and the gospel, so speak up. We can help others openly, so help them. We can support ministries, so support them. We can be openly Christian, so be Christ openly. We can support the persecuted, so support them – if you are free.

18. Disciples just do not want to be served, especially by their rabbi/teacher/leader! Their souls have been or are being adjusted to serving, not to being served. John was there [13:1-20] when Peter objected to their Rabbi’s washing of his feet.

On the other hand, although Jesus was their rabbi He had no difficulty washing his disciples’ feet – the opposite of that which would ordinarily be expected between rabbi and disciples. Key to His being able to do that was His love for them and that He knew who He was and what was going on in the natural realm around them and in all 3 heavens/spiritual dimensions. That means 1) around them in Jerusalem, 2) in the spiritual battleground of the earth’s atmosphere, and 3) in heaven where His Father resided in complete control of that which together They had planned from before creation. This phase of Their work, the Son’s brief time on Earth, was about finished. Remaining ahead was the all-important crowning glory of the next 36 hours. The finish line must be crossed without disqualification.

When we know the situation as the Lord knows it [the heavenly view], we can serve without requiring repayment, love without limit or obvious reason, and be served by our leaders without becoming uncomfortable.

19. Notice that the Lord Jesus did not take responsibility for the lack of insight of the multitudes, of the Jewish leaders, or even of the disciples. He taught; He explained; He prayed for them; but He did not assume responsibility for their deafness and blindness. He attributed their problem to the Deceiver, and yet beyond that to His Father’s over-arching plan – Matt. 11:25-26; John 6:44; 12:37-41. Without going several possible directions with that thought, I’ll say that He knew His job/calling and did it faithfully, including limiting it to the Jews. His was not to convert the world or even all those who heard His voice. He did not carry the extra and impossible load of having to produce results. He was the Result, and He offered Himself to whomever the Father gave Him.

There are lots for us to learn as we labor to bring about any results and The Results. My impression is that the matter of teacher’s responsibility is not very simple.

20. The Lord turns none away, and He does not act clutchy in order to keep to Himself those who come to Him. But, on the contrary, He does thin out those who come to Him. The thinning occurs when He says or does something that His disciples do not accept. John was one who stayed, and in 6:66 he described others leaving their group. When we talk beyond our walk it is the Holy Spirit’s job to elevate our walk or to reduce our talk. To leave us in our hypocrisy would be ungodly of Him, unless we absolutely determine to remain there. Another way to say that is that He purifies our love for Him.

21. Since age 33, when the Lord took me up into Life with Him, my prayers have been brief – very brief compared to those of my brethren. That has not bothered me because, although I have compared the length of my prayers to others, I don’t make a judgment on the matter. It is merely an observation that gathers information for my memory bank.

Ordinarily I address the Lord personally, perhaps express my love and admiration, then present the situation to Him. We often talk it over, although many are only presentations on my part. Since I consider that I walk in His and my fellowship continually [rather, His continually and mine not continually because my mind, unlike His, wanders] I don’t have to review too much or catch up on my ongoing attitude or behavior. Then the conversation on that topic is done and life moves on.

In all of that, I try to perceive God’s perspective, which may not mean also having His mind on the matter. He is all-mighty, sovereign, wise, loving, and the perfect judge of all people, places and things. He shares His perspective with us, which is a much simpler and limited [but very helpful] thing than His judgment/decisions. The process of coming to His perspective is easier and more accurate. It allows more for the holy spiritually and biblically oriented human mind to function in its independent (?) reasoning process. But to come to His mind [judgment] in a matter requires total background knowledge of all factors in the universe, unless He brings us directly to the point and gives us the result of His considerable understanding. This is why He cautions us about judging – due to unrighteousness and partial knowledge.

I have heard it said that a man with a small vision will pray small prayers. I’m not finished Thinking on this.

22. I have a Thought that may not be new to you, as it also is not new to me. But, I want to carefully formulate it and say it clearly. What better way than to write it out, edit it until perfected☺, and then send it to you?

It has to do with the ministry of the church in the workplace and how it is different from its ministry in the church-place. It has to do with the calling of those workplace ministers and how they do and don’t live out their ultimate desires of bringing the world to Christ while at work. It has to do with their calling to Christianize society, beginning at their personal place of ministry and everywhere else they find themselves “Monday through Friday.” They are full-time ministers of the gospel [when they get a grasp on who they are and what is their calling].

Trying to get their unbelieving coworkers to come to church with them in order to hear the gospel is far from their minds, because they know they are the church and are the human presentation of the gospel to their coworkers every day.

Workplace ministers are “out there” functioning [working and ministering] within the kingdom of this world. That’s where they have found their pulpit and congregation. While the Lord Jesus reigns in their hearts and they have the desire that all come to believe the gospel, they know that their function is to bring the principles of God’s kingdom into their work environment, without being religious [unless and perhaps if the workplace allows open evangelization or some degree of it]. They need not use religious terms and may not speak of Jesus or God – which is no problem to the workplace minister. He knows he is sent there to establish Jesus’ kingdom in the workplace, not necessarily in the individual hearts of his coworkers. Anyone who does come to the Lord through his ministry is fully sold on the full-time Christian life because it was the Life and its practical, full-time expression that drew him.

I will add this at this point. The workplace minister is not bothered by his being surrounded by unbelief and unrighteousness in his workplace, as would be the minister in the church-place. In fact, the church-place minister is instructed to see to the change of the unrighteous ones or put them out of the ministry and possibly out of the church. But unrighteousness is what the workplace minister expects of the world he is sent into every day. Some of the most unrighteous ones in his “congregation” may be those in workplace authority over him. Unrighteous practices and character are common environments to him, as it was while Potiphar and Pharaoh ruled in Joseph’s workplaces.

That is where the rub may begin in the minds of the church-place ministers, whose open and avowed focus is to establish the rule of Christ in the hearts and minds of all those to whom they minister. If there is not love and understanding and someone with a wise hand, the workplace minister may consider the church-place minister too irrelevant to the world and to the spread of the gospel [not worth a bucket of warm spit], and the church-place minister may consider the workplace minister a backslidden apostate to the faith who has lost his love for the Lord [and not worth a double-sized bucket of warm spit].

In this little Thought we have been thinking of the Great Commission, haven’t we.

23. Are you tempted, perhaps without even knowing it, to deny human nature, nullify the cross and take salvation into your own hands? Never!!? Yet, Christians can be tempted to interpret man’s innate moral sense, and its exercise, as evidence of man’s perfectibility without the necessity of being born again, especially if there was a coating of religiosity. Next would come the putting of our faith in those institutions or persons which cannot be perfected without God’s indwelling Spirit. That includes politics, your capable and trusted atheist scout leader, and your kindly neighbor next door. All must be born again.

In the meantime, the Lord will have us use and variably rely upon those frail institutions for good. He even reminded us to honor them and to obey them as the ministers of God [ex.: civil government].

24. “Some of the biggest cases of mistaken identity are among intellectuals who have trouble remembering that they are not God.” – Thomas Sowell

In my personal experience, that can apply to any of us.

25. If the Lord is to save us, “lost” must first be our condition or expectation. It may be that we are saved from hell, from fire, from slavery, from a car wreck, from a flood, from sickness, etc. But for Him to save us *into* we must be first saved *from*.

“For you, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined; You brought us into the net; You laid affliction on our backs; You have caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; but you brought us out to rich fulfillment.” -- Psalm 66:10-12

26. Why do religious systems, those outside of Christianity and those within, become so hypocritical? That problem is real to me, particularly because I am part of the system and part of the problem. You are, too. There is but One who is part of the system but not part of the problem. He is our hope for a clean system. Listen to Him.

27. Jesus had lots of trouble with the religious leaders. He did not try to avoid them, although He did pick certain of His times of contact with them. I was thinking about those very religious people and how they thought and did things against Him apparently with “good” cause. Their main problem was that He called Himself God’s Son. They considered Him to be greatly puffing Himself up, which would have been less of a problem if He only had not called Himself God’s Son.

Then, He did not respect them the way they desired. He confronted them; rather, it was they who usually confronted Him. Obviously, He was not impressed with their robes and tassels, or with their long prayers and higher seats. He did not honor them the way they wanted.

Also, He presented Himself and His thoughts with authority. People were drawn to Him because He was Life and had words of Life. The religious leaders were minimized when He was around. Their positions were threatened. The worst time was during His triumphal entrance into Jerusalem when the people were praising God for and about Him.

Jesus also was not reluctant to point out the faults of those religious leaders – to their faces or in their absence. That must have been very belittling to them. Indeed, should any righteous person do such a thing?

In times B. C. and A. D., others certainly less righteous than Jesus Christ have behaved the same as He and received similarly adverse consequences. What I am Thinking is that leaders [church, business, family, government, etc.] could benefit from a review of ourselves according to the faults of those religious leaders who did not understand or appreciate Jesus. Otherwise, we might do things they did with “good cause.” Consider: 1) What is your response when a subordinate thinks more of himself and his position and work than you think he should? 2) Do your attitudes and actions stir others to speak out to and about you, even confrontationally? 3) Are some not impressed with your higher level of importance? How does that impact you? 4) Do others seem to pay more attention to your subordinates than they do to you? What do you do about that?

This is an exercise in humility for those who lead or have “more” than others. It may be church or social status, financial status, business or governmental position – anywhere you have headship. Is our responsibility mixed well with humility? As we are admonished for other reasons to “Remember Lot’s wife,” here we are advised to “Remember the Pharisees.”

28. If you want a quick course on understanding a certain person, try to change him.

29. Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself, but talent instantly recognizes genius.” -Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Hasta!