THOUGHTS OF AUGUST, 2018

1. Which comes first, walking with Jesus or taking up our cross? I suppose it can go either way, but Jesus said, “Take up your cross and follow Me.” Notice the order of His call to become and remain His disciples – take up your cross [consider Me well, commit to Me, then daily follow Me.] Taking up our crosses is basic to following Him. In fact, if we don’t take up our cross and follow Him we are not worthy of Him – Matt. 10:38.

How do you define worthy? How about “deserving?” Do you see what He said? Some would be worthy/deserving of Him. Wow! And we had always considered everyone unworthy of Him. But Jesus chose His words and decides who are worthy and who are not, in this case based on our cross bearing. It’s almost unimaginable how we can be worthy of Him, but what is imaginable to Him can be imparted to our imagination [revelation].

There were many who benefitted from spending time with Jesus, being with Him on weekends or days off from work for those special occasions with Him, but they were not His disciples. I can imagine them saying, “Maybe later, but now I don’t have the time. You have given me other responsibilities.” Peter and the others were at work when they simply walked off their jobs and went with Him! Could that be an example of normal Christianity? [Yes.] That sort of response impacted the spiritual quality of their lives, their crosswalk, their discipleship, and their “other responsibilities.” Still does.

1. The world’s situations can seem to be the cause of our uneasiness or fear or insecurity but that’s not true. When we begin to draw our life from the kingdom of darkness, we certainly will experience the ups and downs of that kingdom. But those signs of instability are warning signals that we are drawing death from darkness instead of Life from Light. We do have to deal with this world as long as our King leaves us here, but living according to Satan’s kingdom offers us nothing. As Jesus’ people, we are to abide in the King and His kingdom, not to get down and dirty with the world.

Living close to the Lord reduces all things in comparison to the eternal. God’s unstoppable plan is to reduce all things and to increase Jesus; that means everything in and around us. That dynamic will continue until all has been wrapped up into Him. That is your, my, and creation’s destiny. We came entirely from Him and we will end up being entirely in Him – John 3:30.

1. It is a blessing to read the righteous responses of righteous kings to the words and delivery styles of the prophets of their days. See 1 Chronicles 32:20 [Hezekiah and Isaiah] and 2 Samuel 12:7 [David and Nathan]. As you know, those who received the prophets also received that which the prophets received from the Lord. Jesus applied that Old Testament principle also to His New Testament people in Matthew 10:41. Yet, the prophetic word, which is now rare in the church, is often rejected when it is offered. King Ahab typifies one of the unrighteous responses in 1 Kings 22:8 (1-28). The flesh cannot receive the prophetic word righteously. It will either take a complimentary word and be proud, or take a corrective word and pout. Both responses reject the heavenly purpose of the word.
2. Our crosswalk is God’s plow, man’s soul is the soil, the lives and deaths of previous believers is the fertilizer, God’s word is the seed, believers are the sowers, the Holy Spirit is the rain, and the harvest is those of the kingdom. Trusting and obeying Jesus results in our planting less tares [so I hear].
3. If we do not speak the truth, there is no way we can be loving. Speaking the truth is not love itself but it can be the beginning of Life, which is a very loving gift.
4. The Lord continues recruitment for His army. He is serious and intense. He is picky. He knows exactly who He wants, and where they are. He wants those who agree with Him from their hearts more than from their intellects. Another way to say that is that He wants [many] foolish ones, but not [many] world-wise ones – 1 Cor. 1:26-29. He is not after good people [“God, I thank You that I am not like other people ..” – Luke 18:11.], but is after those who are aware of their sinfulness [“God, be merciful to me, the sinner!” – Luke 18:13.] He especially likes volunteers.
5. You have often heard [and found?] that some of the Lord’s commands are difficult to obey. That is true, they are, but they are difficult only on our flesh. That makes those difficult encounters even more important. They become heavenly report cards from our Father, informing us of another area of our souls that He is scrubbing. They are revelations of the grip sin had on us as we are about to be further released into the freedom of the Spirit.
6. Definitely, we can hear the Lord speak to us personally. It appears that hearing Him is dependent upon things like our current peacefulness, our faithfulness to Him and to His previously spoken word to us. I’ll have to add, “Whenever it pleases Him” because He is the Lord! He accomplishes His own purposes aside from and through us. How many others, and who they are that hear the word He speaks to one of His, depends on the depth of our personal unity one to one and on our corporate unity. Our one to one unity allows us to hear the very words and feel the same heartbeat together. Our typical less than one to one unity, and larger group corporate disunity, limits our hearing to “whenever the Lord tells me that, then I’ll do it.” There is a third and faithful group of God-hearers who does not need to hear the Lord themselves in the matter but who consistently live in faith and unity and are bonded in the Spirit with those who do hear. We all have, or can, fit into each of those groups.
7. It is good to be aligned with and encouraged by Peter if we are talking about him before and after Jesus’ crucifixion. There was much of the flesh in Peter before the crucifixion, and less afterwards; little of faith before the crucifixion and much afterwards. He really does help me see myself and to judge myself properly, meaning without spinning or blaming others for my sins, praising the Lord for His grace to me and through others, and with adequate clarity and honesty on most occasions.

As I have on many occasions over the 54 years of my walk with the Lord, I was reading Mark 10:28-30. Although I read much for teaching preparation, I try to read for myself first. Today I read Peter saying to Jesus, “Behold, we have left everything and followed you.” To which Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much in the present age, houses, and bothers, and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecution; and in the age to come, eternal life.” I looked into my soul and still saw the same thing in me that Peter had going in himself – pride. The encouraging part of the encounter was that this time I had to look longer and deeper to find it.

I’m only 88, and the Lord has already made some progress.

1. “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.” – G. K. Chesterton
2. It sounds disjointed, and it is, if we wrongly understand that the Lord Jesus told us He would give us rest by putting us into a yoke; we to pull one side of the yoke and He the other side. But that’s not what He said and meant. He said and meant for each one of us to take His yoke, all of it, upon us, individually, not jointly with Him.

In the natural, when two oxen are having their very familiar yoke put on them they know that their time of rest is over. They are about to go to work. That is the way this picture is usually, but wrongly, understood – that we would take one side of the yolk and Jesus would take the other side, then He and we could do our work together. That is called “rest?” Not so. And it is very prideful of us.

 Jesus wanted us to understand that His own yoke united His soul and Spirit together into one always-united person, laborer, and functionary. That made Him, as both God and man, in His effortless Spirit and in His laboring humanity, into one person, one laborer here on earth, resulting in all His labors being done at rest. At rest means without doubting and the other fleshly characteristics that come with doubting. He had that and that’s what we, too, need.

He will give each of us His yolk, full-time, to unite our soul and Spirit into one person as was He, to deliver believers of being double-living, wobbling from flesh to Spirit, and Spirit to flesh. When we are yoked we are again as we should be.

1. As God’s servant, King David knew that all things had been put in subjection to him – Ps. 8:all; Heb. 2:8 (5-8). He had a good but at that time incomplete understanding of the application of that truth, but he knew it was true and in effect “now” for him and others. Now we, as sons of God, know that, too, don’t we? The Lord sends us out into the world that He has already overcome. We see His victory when we go where, when, and how He went. When we go, as He went, we find that we have the same things happen to us that happened to Him, that we have the same results that He had, and that the world is really in subjection to Him. We find those results when we go in obedience to Him – not when we don’t go or when we go not according to His guidance.

Then there is the “but” and the “yet” of Hebrews 2:8 because we don’t now find all things obviously under Him. Among our successes, we are mistreated, shunned, martyred, etc. – as Jesus, David, Paul and many others were. God’s plan is for this “but not yet” time to be full of glory as we live by faith in the accomplishment. Fortunately, the narrow Gate and the Way are well-traveled by saints. The evil spiritual forces oppose us, as do humans and other fallen objects of God’s creation. But even that opposition, and the worst that they can do, are all to God’s glory as He sends His saints into lions’ dens.

1. Twisting God’s Word by re-interpreting words, bending words, and other sorts of “higher understandings” is one of the devil’s most common techniques for “gaining God’s permission” to do our own thing. He wants to confuse and lead astray those who might otherwise be headed for glory. From within the religious church is his most common and neoplastic starting point. Homosexuality is no greater or lesser sin than many others we could name, but it is at the forefront of the devil’s current religious and social assault. Pick your favorite translation and let’s read some scripture. From the New American Standard Bible:

Leviticus 18:22 – “You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.” Verse 29 – “For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.”

Leviticus 20:13 – “If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.”

From Romans 1:18-32, taking only verses 26-27, “For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [“by perversion” -- margin], nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.” The next verse reminds all such and otherwise sinners of their way out of sin: “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

And finally, in 1 Timothy 1:8-10 – “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, ..”

In the Old Testament the punishment for homosexuality and other serious sins was physical death and was meted out by society. In the New Testament, the punishment is spiritual death and is meted out by the Holy Spirit.

1. That which is meant to make life easier and more understandable, sometimes can make life more difficult. Today’s example comes via John and the Holy Spirit in 1 John 1:6, when John wrote, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him [“Jesus” – ed.] and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” Then, contrary to what some of us simple minded ones would have preferred, he did not give us a long list of what it means to walk in darkness, and what he meant to not practice the truth.

I suppose John left that to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, but he did nail the answer for those who wanted one big, all-encompassing answer – “.. but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Again, our flesh is left to deal with what is meant by fellowship [depth, intensity, actions], how many others must be in our fellowship group, and so forth. It was the same John who remembered, with the Spirit’s help, that on Jesus’ last evening He prayed to His Father that they/we would all love one another as much and the way that He loved them/us – John 17.

How do you judge yourself in the matter of walking in the Light instead of darkness, practicing the truth, having fellowship with one another, and being cleansed from all your sins? To answer those accurately, we must have a heavenly vision and be free to hear His answer in us.

1. The devil cannot control those whom he cannot deceive. Of course, I am the one who cannot be deceived! We are either deceived or open to deception when we rely upon our eyes, ears, and intellect to bridge the gap between that which we say we believe and that which we really live. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, is the One who whispers the truth into our souls. He is the only one who can and will lead us into all Truth. Our part is to be open to Him, not thinking we know it all, remembering that there is much more to be received. The devil cannot control those whom he cannot deceive.
2. In our Saturday Night Bible Study, we talked about Husbands and Men. The previous week we had talked about Wives and Women. You would have enjoyed the evenings. Some of the points made about the ladies were:
3. When the Lord speaks, hearing Him takes us from chaos and confusion, to orderliness; from self-centeredness and human reason, to our cross-walk and faith; from fear and anger, to His peacefulness; from wandering and resentment, to the Way of Christ. The present Eastern and Western World’s disorder in marriage and sexuality lacks the application of God’s mind and word.
4. In God’s kingdom, rank is necessary for structure and function but rank does not create inequality of persons – 1 Cor. 12:12-26.
5. After The Fall, the Lord modified the souls and functions of humanity and the devil, in relation to Him, to one another, and to the rest of creation. Then He organized and commissioned them according to their new natures. He organized Eve under her husband, Adam, by her will being yielded to her husband’s will. In turn, her husband would have to exercise rule over and responsibility for her – Gen. 3:16. As time passed, that rule and responsibility over women was shown to be required of fathers, related males, husbands, and church-provided male headship.
6. Queen Jezebel and King Ahab are examples of the ongoing contrariness. He fought the nation’s battles and she ran the family, the nation, and him.
7. The perfect Old Testament and New Testament woman and wife is shown in Proverb 31:10-31. She does all manner of things, business and home, while her children and husband praise her for her character and ability. He is acknowledged as home and city leader. This is perfectly summarized in 1 Peter 3:7.
8. Women and wives are to be quiet in mixed meetings, and be taught at home by their men [father, husband, other male covering] – 1 Cor. 14:34-35. How is this working in your life? Otherwise, there is spiritual disorder, which may make a difference only to God [according to His word and will] and to some others [observers], including the devil [who is always lurking around looking for individual and church weakness]. If the devil reverses God’s order in the home, it is not long before he reverses it in the church and then in society. The Lord does make exceptions to the application of this orderliness, but the nature of humanity is to expand God’s exceptions into abuse, as well as to narrow His word into suppression of the Holy Spirit’s flexibility.
9. Women are not to be in authority over men. The other side of this coin is not, “Men are not to submit to the authority of women.” When men encounter women in authority, whether in or out of the church, the men are to submit to the established order, while knowing that the order shows weakness and/or disorder in the church and society, which is only temporary before God. Women, although being equal in their persons, are to submit to and obey their male spiritual heads. This can be properly customized in many forms.
10. What do you do when you see that your beliefs and practices are contrary to God’s Word, and you know that you are not going to obey Him? That’s a terrible question because it supposes that you do that very thing. The scriptures are entirely consistent in regards to the functions and rank and equality of the sexes. Yet we drift away from God’s moorings. It may be under the pressure of needing to be “modern,” and “who wants to be known as a sexist?” God’s word is always modern and is as unchangeable as Himself. That which is modern to humanity wobbles off and on God’s narrow way over the years, with consequences.

Males and females are called to follow the Lord Jesus’ example – thus our lessons on Male and Female, Husbands and Wives. Jesus laid down His imperfect human will in order to obey His Father in all things. That’s our calling, also. He had to walk His course perfectly, but we are allowed to fall and be restored, or perhaps suffer from our failures. But it is important for us to know the perfect and absolute truth because the bull’s eye is the only mark the Lord gives us to shoot for – Matt. 5:48.

Let’s look at two examples among many of the Lord’s handling of those who missed their mark such as, in our study, when men do not accept the godly leadership and care of women, or women do not submit to and obey the particular men in their lives. There are many examples of His grace. In Luke 18:18-22 Jesus expressed only love for the rich young ruler who chose earthly riches rather than the eternal riches of discipleship. In John 8:1-11 Jesus did not condemn the adulterous woman whom He had said in scripture was to be stoned to death, but instead set her free and told her to stop committing adultery. My point is that the Lord is forgiving, patient, and not personally threatened by us in anything, although He has reminded us of the coming judgment.

 Now to husbands and men:

1. You recall that in Genesis 3:14-15, after The Fall, the Lord humbled the serpent below all the other creatures, physically [no legs] and spiritually [cursed him]. And He created an innate ill-will between the devil and the woman and her seed. To the woman the Lord ordained great discomfort in pregnancy and childbirth, and created in her a new desire, to honor and obey her husband. To match that change, the husband was then given authority over and responsibility for her. Those two new changes of soul were and are important. Her will was subjugated [“submitted by the power of God”] to her husband’s will [also, in him “by the power of God”]. As with everything of God’s order, woman can faithfully walk with her head [father, husband, church provided headship] in God’s order, or choose otherwise. In regards to the choosing, there was an additional change in her soul [sin], a weakness in doing what she knew she should and wanted to do. Paul described Eve’s and Adam’s new, fallen sin nature in Romans 7.
2. To the man the Lord pointed out that Adam had listened to [“harkened to,” “gave heed to”] the woman instead of the Lord and His command. He was now responsible for knowing the difference between Eve’s desires and God’s will, and for setting their joint course on God’s will. Adam, too, noticed that there was an additional change in his soul [sin], a weakness in doing what he knew he should and wanted to do. Those weaknesses have caused some friction over the last 6,000 years. Moses and his wife offer us one such example when, at the Wayside Motel, she resisted God’s order of the circumcision of their two sons, then in a pout did the circumcision(s) herself. She then gathered the boys and went back home to her father while Moses went on with the Lord to Egypt to deliver his people – Ex. 4:24-26. Notice that she resisted Moses’ will to the near-death of her husband. The wife’s submission and obedience, and the husband’s acceptance of headship is of primary importance in family, church, and society.
3. Whereas the Lord had cursed the devil to crawn on his belly and eat dust, the man was to become a farmer of that same dust, but out there in the field in the devil’s domain, not inside the perfect garden. Adam was to toil in sweat and sorrow as he worked to make a living for himself, Eve, and others. Unlike with Eve’s occasional childbearing, Adam would have continuous resistance while toiling with the soil. Remember that before The Fall they were in the Garden where all was provided for them. Life was now completely different. Isn’t it weird that we still have to work for our living! 😊 But, as good as we think this fallen life is at times, and how well-adapted to our fallen state we are, soon we will all return to the original plan.
4. So, now the man had to take responsibility for the woman [protection + provision + leadership = headship] in body and soul. When she rejects her husband’s headship, he is responsible for bringing her into compliance – as Christ is responsible for bringing the church into compliance as the church rejects Him – Eph 5:22-23. Likewise, when the man rejects his responsibilities over her, she has a responsible role in bringing him into compliance, snuggling up “under” him in body and soul – 1 Pet. 3:7. Jesus is doing this perfectly with the church so we should learn of Him. It all comes down to men and women, husbands and wives, taking responsibility for bringing the other into God’s plans – Prov. 14:1; 1 Pet. 3:1-7.
5. Paul wrote, “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ – 1 Cor. 11:3. Remember, men, that “No [“man” – ed.] one can serve two masters [“God and wife” – ed.]” – Matt. 6:24.
6. Colossians 3:18-19 – “Wives be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands love your wives and do not be embittered against them.” Can you imagine, men, that you could ever become embittered against your wife?
7. Titus 2:2-6 – All so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Is God and His word dishonored this way at you home?
8. Acts 6:1 – The church was not fulfilling its headship role over older single women, so those women called the men to task.
9. Proverb 18:22 – Husbands, is a wife immediately and always “a good thing?” Yes. If not, then what? Accept her as such and get with the program.
10. I hear that sometimes it is as in Proverbs 19:13-14. Let’s not forget Proverb 9:7-12 as we head for Revelation 21 & 22.
11. There is a time and place for big ministries and for little ministries; a time and place for big congregations and for little congregations, because the Lord is in and with them both – Matt. 18:19-20. The little group may be two believers at work, or at the scene of an automobile accident on the highway, or at home or school. Two or three believers constitute a functioning local body of Christ and He is there for the occasion. Live ready for church to be formed.
12. It has been said many times before, by me, you, and others, that homosexuality is a sin -- Romans 1:18-32. And that the devil is a liar whose job is to lie and tempt and destroy all over the world, including in the church. The church is supposed to be the purveyor of God’s truth, and among the biblically informed and Spirit submitted church that is true. The truth as the Lord speaks it is spoken in His love. The religious organization commonly called “the church” goes about gayly doing its own and perhaps God’s thing and is suffering its demise here on earth – a taste of that which is to come on earth and in the here-after.

The closer Jesus came to the end of His time on earth, the more He spoke about the deceiver and his lies. Not all of the devil’s lies are totally false, many are partial truths. That still makes them lies but any ingredient of truth in lies opens the mind of hearers to listen to more. He used that deceptive technique on Eve in the garden, and continues using it while setting the course of history on a path of rebellion and destruction. The devil’s purpose is to take a bit of the truth, and of justice, and slowly to turn the well-informed hearer’s thinking upside down.

Another technique of the deceiver is to repeat a lie so many times that the hearer begins to believe it. Another is to have an exalted or trusted person accept and repeat his lies. Other well-known techniques are to entice by bribery or press with a threat. The spiritual church’s choices -- know the truth, live in prayer, boldly speak up with the truth, love the Family. If not, terrorists and rioters in the street will be called “freedom fighters,” dying sinners will be “gay,” fake news will be “obvious truth,” up will be “down,” and God will be “the depriver of happiness and personal fulfillment.”

Remember that Jesus warned us to “Take heed that no one deceives you.” The refusal to love the truth results in anything other than the truth – 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

1. The first principle of Christian economics is that everything belongs to the Lord; man is never more than a steward and he must act accordingly.

1. When you have a problem do you want compassion [pity] or sympathy [situation sharing]? I believe that those definitions accurately state the difference between those two very similar but different words. There are times when we need only a bit of compassion to get along with our situation. But there are other times when we need others to get into our life to help pull the load. The vital difference can be that our friends understand God’s purpose for us in the matter. That is not an assured fact. Consider the following, whether the responders had compassion or sympathy, the difference hopefully being based on knowing or partly knowing how God’s hand was in the situation:
2. Adam for Eve – Gen. 3:6, 16.
3. Abraham for Isaac – Gen. 22:2, 9-10.
4. Job’s loving and faithful wife – Job 2:9-10.
5. Job’s three dedicated friends – Job 2:11-13.
6. Jesus for John the Baptist – Matt. 11:2-6; 14:3-12.
7. Peter for Jesus – Matt. 16:21-23.
8. Jesus for Lazarus – John 11:6.
9. If something is an option, it is a temptation. Such as divorce, taking something not your property, anything but the truth, shady language, negative comments about your neighbor, persistent ill-will, lingering over feminine pulchritude, and any other disobedience to the Lord.
10. It’s a common, humorous thing to say aloud when certain guests are leaving your home, “Honey, count the silver. The Joneses are leaving.” I don’t know the absolute origin of that friendly jab, but the procedure was going on already in the fifth century B. C. See 1 Chronicles 9:28 where it was said of a group of priests, “Now some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they counted them when they brought them in and when they took them out.”
11. When humanity loses its perspective on being created by God and in His image and for His purposes, anything goes, and it is going! Humans are busy creating their own moral universes of meaning, including the material universe. And while we have been creating our gods, we have become like gods, although the quality of our divinity is greatly lacking.

What does it mean to be human? In July, 2018 a court in India issued a ruling that accorded the status of “legal person or entity” to animals, saying “they have a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.” The court declared that “the entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.” Animal worship is not a new thing to humans.

I suppose we are not too surprised that that example is in India where animals are gods, but there is a drive on internationally to grant rights to the entirety of the natural world, and the natural world has already achieved stunning victories in Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, and in 30 American cities. The New Zealand Parliament declared one of their rivers to be an “integrated, living whole” possessing “rights and interests.” Nature worship is not a new thing to humans. I wonder if, when the river floods, it can be sued by those damaged by it?

At the same time, Westminster Abbey has held a service in which it said, “NHS [the National Health Service] is the most powerful and visible expression of our Christian heritage, because it sprang out of a concern that the poor should be able to be treated as well as the rich.” A good question is why does the Anglican Church no longer believes itself to be the “most powerful and visible expression” of the United Kingdom’s Christian heritage? That is a revelation of the godship of the state, its “grace” being here shown through its healing and lifesaving. Yet, the people do not hold their god in high esteem. The NHS almost always ranks in the bottom third of international comparisons of health system performance, on a par with the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

We are making our own persons and gods. That’s an old practice. If you want to see how many god’s you have, check your fear and insecurity levels when your finances, retirement funds, health, etc., etc. are threatened. Anything that causes you to lose your peace if it is threatened, is a god. Our God, the Prince of Peace, is the only God and He keeps us in perfect peace as we so acknowledge Him.

1. Ah, wisdom! It was not only the love of God, but also His wisdom that sent Jesus His Son to the cross for us. “.. we speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; ..” God has used the unrighteous ignorance of humanity to rescue that same humanity! If they had had righteous knowledge [wisdom] they would have not done the very thing they needed to do. Now we are responding to His call to follow Jesus onto our own crosses, where others repeat the process, now crucifying us instead of Jesus, and getting [at least occasionally] their eternal benefit from our dyings. What a whirligig of Life!
2. Stages in a successful work of the Holy Spirit: impossible, difficult, done.