THOUGHTS OF MARCH, 2018

1. There are times for evaluations of self, employees, life’s direction, our finances, etc., etc. We continually need to make judgments, so we do. The spiritual person judges, evaluates, and appraises all things – 1 Cor. 2:15. If we do not judge, or if we judge poorly, we become examples of those who “fall into the ditch” along the Way. So, making good, proper, and accurate judgments is essential for staying on the Path.

But there is another side to making our judgments. They should be not only as right and accurate as possible, but they must also be righteous – Matt. 7:1-2. That means with a good attitude. Making judgments with a bad attitude is the type of judgment the Lord forbids of His people. He reinforces His command with a warning that if we judge unrighteously we will be judged by Him and others with the same severity. It doesn’t take much long-range wisdom to see that we need to clean up our act if we are doing that sort of judgment.

In a recent Bible Study we reminded ourselves of the need for both accurate and righteous judgment, then we engaged in an evening of judging the condition of the church, including ourselves. We approached our task with extra caution, reminding ourselves that we would be talking about King Jesus’ dearly beloved fiancée, the church.

We started very basically with “What is church, according to the Lord?” Answers: 1) A people called out of the world to be sold out to God in this world. 2) Those chosen by God to worship Him in Christ, according to His word and Spirit. 3) Those with a heavenly future. 4) Those into whom the Lord has placed His Spirit. 5) Members of God’s eternal family. 6) The body of Christ. 7) The bride of Christ. 8) The worldwide, all-time body of believers in Jesus Christ, including any gathered two or more individuals of such. 9) Those for whom Jesus died to bring into existence and to be with Him forever.

As part of the answer to what is church, we considered what the church is not and what it ought to be, again according to the Lord. Answers: 1) The fullness of Christ on earth. 2) The fullness of Jesus Christ’s joy. 3) Those hated by non-Christians because we are like Jesus. 4) Those who show the unity with God that Jesus had, and with one another. 5) A people known for showing forth humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance for one another. 6) Those who work diligently to preserve among us the unity of the Spirit that Christ died for and gave us. 7) Those who are noted for their resistance against hard-heartedness, sensuality, impurity, and greed. 8) Believers in Jesus Christ who are anointed with the Holy Spirit, exercise the Spirit’s gifts, and function with the five-fold ministry of God’s word as in Jesus. 9) Speakers of God’s mind on all matters, to itself and to the world, and who are being listened to.

And we launched into the deep with: If you were the Lord of the Church, the King of the kingdom, the Builder of the church, the Head of the body, the Groom of the bride, and the All-Mighty Living Word – what would you do to, with and about the church today? Possibilities: Make us all Baptists? All Catholics? All Pentecostals? All Methodists? Ecumenical? [No one wanted all of the church to be of their own denomination!] Wipe it out and start over, with us – as in Ex. 32:10? Resurrect Billy Graham and make him the leader of a new worldwide church? The eventual consensus was if we were the Lord we would do exactly as He is now doing, although we would be tempted to make some “improvements.”

NOTE: The unrighteousness in the church did not originate with our present leaders. They are themselves victims of a much older evil – the devil. Our leaders found that most of the mess we are in was already there. Some corrected it, some flowed with it, and some did nothing. Going against the flow of the world in the church is costly but some are undertaking the task. There is an old Latin saying, “Nudisnudum Christi sequi,” which translates as, “Naked, follow the naked Christ.” It is a call for the persecuted, hungry, faithful ones to follow the Lord Jesus, who first walked their path.

Then, because we are a reasonably insightful and honest group, there came a hard question: What do you read in the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit that attracts you enough to lay down your life to live and enjoy the same? We were so honest that we could not answer. We were faced with our Laodicean self-afflictions [Rev. 3:17] and acknowledged that we needed lots of help from the Lord, including a clear, firm word personally before any of us would leap out of our comfortable pews into the dangerous world of verse 18. Like I said, insightful and honest.

Next, what would we expect to see if the Lord began to build “His church” at Church X, which is a dying local congregation known to all of us? Would our answer to that question reflect our individual denominational history? [Yes.] Is that good? [No.] If Jesus asked you what you wanted Him to do at that church, what would you say? “Here am I, send me?” Would we be able to hear and see what He wants us to hear and see, considering our unavoidable, denominationally-molded, negative and positive focuses?

Then, because we were seeing the building material among us that the Lord would not be able to use as He constructed that church, where might He get the kind of material He wants? What kind of building material is He looking for? Is such even available to Him? If Yes, why is He not using it to build at that church? If not available, why is it not available? Have we been imposing the wrong building material on the Builder like that denomination is pushing forward in their traditional way? In that case, what are His choices; what may He do regarding His plans for the church, for the rejected material, and for the unavailable material?

Then we stopped and prayed. Where does that leave us? A Clue: Jesus said [my paraphrase], “Now is the time to apply my judgment upon this world. The ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men to Myself” – John 12:31-32. How much do we know about our Master Builder and about how He builds churches? We can build but when the rains come and the water rises our works are washed away while His churches stand strong. He is not using unfit or unavailable material because He loves whom He is building. She is to be strong and beautiful.

Helpful scripture: The church in the wilderness with Moses – Acts 7:38; Heb. 3 & 4; Rev. 2 & 3.

1. There is an interesting little comparison, perhaps designed by the Lord, between the going up of Christians into heaven at the rapture and the going up of the Jews into Israel as they make aliyah [move back to Israel from the nations in which they had been scattered]. Our rapture takes us up to our heavenly home; making Aliyah [“going up,” or “ascent”] takes them up to Israel. In the world the Jews go up to Israel, and in Israel going to Jerusalem is termed “going up to Jerusalem,” which has nothing to do with topographic elevations. Many of the world’s Jews are making their Aliyah, so it might be said that natural Israel is undergoing its rapture. Our rapture, too, is on the way.

By the way. The Jewish word for “descent” or “going down” is yerida. Christians also know of a going down process and place.

The Hebrew word “khatan” means bridegroom, one who joins himself, to be one forever, inseparable. It is used of the Messiah, the husband-to-be of the church who has taken us to Himself forever. He has taken every part of us, including our sins when He was on the cross. Jesus became my/our sin so He could take it away, to the grave, and leave it there. In His death my sin and guilt and shame and regrets died forever. Then He assumed all of our debts when he joined Himself to us. What a Redeemer! I have a son who gladly assumed the college debts of his wife when he married her. His love for her made those debts miniscule. So it is with Christ and the church – each one of us.

1. With this Thought I want to say up front that sin is bad, and that the world and every one of us would be better off without ever sinning again. I hope that you see the impossibility of that. It is not only impossible but is unreal. And further, it is uninformed, short-sighted, and worldly to think it would be possible.

It was not beyond the Lord’s reach, imagination and power to design and create a “humanity” without the ability to sin. But why would He create such a machine? It would not have been created in His image. What use would we be to Him? What righteous and mature purpose in God would such creatures fulfill? What righteous and mature purpose for themselves would such creatures fulfill? Righteousness and love already abounded among Them/Him, the Trinity. In order to enlarge upon Himself and that which He already had, He needed frail, sinful individuals who would yield to the revelations and actions of His love for them, and to the evil temptations of the devil. They would need redemption, after falling into sin over and over, and after rejecting Him to the utmost.

Sin was necessary. It was not good but was necessary. We can get a glimpse of that good necessity as we ourselves intentionally bring children into the family, knowing beforehand that there are going to be times of grief, pain, division, self-will, chastisement, necessary and unnecessary sacrifice, and many other negatives that will eventually add up to being positives – Rom. 8:28.

Now to the Thought. Jesus told Peter that Peter would betray Him that very night. Peter’s denial added to the tragedy of Jesus’ passion but He was not surprised or disappointed when Peter failed. Peter was caught off-guard, surprised and disappointed but Jesus was not. Jesus’ prayer and focus for Peter was for Peter’s life and ministry after he sinned, not that Peter would not betray Him. He prayed, “.. but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” – Luke 22:32.

Peter’s sin humbled [“reduced”] him so that he could show and live more of Jesus. Peter’s problem had not been that he was weak, but that he was unwilling and unable to see his weakness. “I will never deny you!” he said. When the SELF, the BIG ME fails, the door is further opened to power, victory and fruitfulness. Sin, and in this case that particular sin, was a necessary ingredient to Jesus’, Peter’s, the other disciples’ [they had also denied that they would deny or forsake Him], and our futures. Sin is bad, is inevitable, and is necessary in God’s plan for us to progress in Him. The results of sin are good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose – again, Rom. 8:28. But let us not intentionally sin more so that grace can abound. God forbid!

1. Here is a great opportunity to make an A+ on an exam. Try to answer these questions according to the way you actually live and make decisions, not according to some dusty theology you might have been taught in Sunday School. Here goes:

1) Do you believe that the human mind is the highest mind there is, and that yours is the best for you?

2) Is the solution to our problems the almighty mind of man, especially yours for your problems?

3) Can we remake the world to eliminate war, poverty and injustice, especially your poverty and injustice?

4) Is the destiny of man in the hands of man, especially is your destiny in your hands?

The Old Time Pentecostals had and still have a good saying: “Leave room for God.” They knew that man’s mind has been deliberately limited by the Lord, and they were not reluctant to act that way. Politicians are not the only humans who believe they can do otherwise.

1. You will need to know only a bit about Hebrew gematria to appreciate this Thought. I googled it for my own benefit. Simply said, letters, names, phrases, etc. of the languages of ancient cultures were assigned number values. The combination or repetition or other arrangement of those letters or names worked out to mean something prophetic. As a country boy believer, I was never impressed with this sort of intricacy, but gematria can be very remarkable and is highly functional in Hebrew, including scripture.

Example: In the Old Testament, according to Hebrew gematria, the Lord’s people had names whose numerical values are multiples of eight, while the names of those who rebelled are multiples of 13. This is one of the greatest evidences the world has ever seen for the verbal inspiration of the Bible. No human foresight or arrangement could have secured such a result beforehand. No human power could have carried it out with such perfection. Thanks, JRC.

1. From the day of Pentecost until His return, it has been, is, and will be necessary for us to be in accord before the Lord will work in power. They waited in the upper room and were “with one mind” [Acts 1:14], and the Lord did as He had said. In the little flock where Nancy and I reside, the Lord has been granting us many graces, one of which is the ease and pleasantness of being increasingly of one accord. That’s what the Lord offers families, congregations, businesses, and any gathering of His people. Have you noticed how much of your self-will must die for that to come about, and how much abundant Life comes from it?
2. The question is often asked, “What is Holy Spirit revival?” Here are some components of Holy Spirit revival that help answer that question: 1) Homes and jobs become churches. 2) Conviction of sins occurs without others’ help. 3) People are afraid to be boastful, loud, or of saying godless things. 4) There is an awareness of God’s real presence. 5) The Lord’s presence becomes real, even without knowledge of good theology. 6) The Bible becomes a love letter from God, and people begin devouring it. 7) People begin to love one another, without any other reason. 8) Groups of believers begin to form any day and any hour. 9) Religious barriers evaporate. 10) Worldly bondages and drug addictions are broken, often without withdrawal symptoms. 11) Scripture is understood and applied.

I will expand on component number 9 according to my understanding of scripture, knowledge of church history, and personal experience – none of which are infallible. The work of the Holy Spirit shows as a) full biblical Pentecostalism with gifts and anointings as described and exercised in scripture, b) powerful Evangelical thrust of the inerrant and dependable word of God, c) catholic oriented worship and community life, and d) [eventually] radical social concern and outward focus.

Notice these two verses, both of which begin with “No one has ever seen God at any time.” Both go on to declare how the world was and is still able to see God. In the days of Jesus’ flesh, God was seen in Christ Himself. He made Him known to the world -- John 1:18. In 1 John 4:12 the same words are followed by, “If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” In other words, now that Jesus Christ in His flesh is gone, He is revealed through the love of Christians for one another. That can be preached and has been lived. Laudato si, Jesus.

1. If asked how long you have been in Christ you would probably answer according to when you first accepted Christ’s sacrifice, or when you were water baptized. Those are good answers, but there is another accurate answer, and a very remarkable one at that. Paul wrote by the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:4 that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. We were in Christ long before we were earthborn. The Lord looked into Himself, saw us, loved us even though we had nothing going for us to influence His choice, and picked us for being in Him forever. We were in the same situation as was Israel when the Lord explained to them that He looked at them and saw nothing to be desired, but that He picked them because He loved them, a group of nobodies and nothings going nowhere.
2. Jesus was a somebody, not a nobody. Yet He, the Bread of Life, had to be broken, which we memorialize regularly in the Lord’s Supper. In His being broken, He was blessed. In His being broken, we are blessed. In our being broken, we are blessed. In our being broken, others are blessed. The route to God’s blessings is through being broken. It’s called the way of the cross.

When the Lord decides to bless someone or something, He breaks us. We may be broken by being diminished or disbanded or by any of many other fiery trials. Job had much possessions and a large, faithful family. The Lord planned for Job a larger blessing, during which he would also receive more family and twice as much wealth. God’s process for Job toward that blessing required a tremendous breaking of Job of all that he was and had. The eternal results for everyone involved were worth their earthly trials. They still are.

1. Nothing new here; just a reminder that the Lord does more with less when it is His project. A mark of it being His project, not ours, is His breaking of us, which the faithful perceive and accept as being His blessing – Mark 8:19-20.
2. When the Israelites came out of Egypt they could have walked into the Promised Land in 10 days. Because of their unbelief that their God who delivered them from Egypt could give them the same victories over their enemies in the Promised Land, they had to wander about in the wilderness for 40 years.

You noticed that there were some of the Promised Land-type enemies in the wilderness, called Amalekites. Israel practiced Promised Land-living in the wilderness by having battles with the Amalekites. Several centuries later, after years of mostly victory in the Promised Land, Israel’s first king, King Saul, and the prophet Samuel defeated Agag, an Amalekite, and his army in the Promised Land. Surprise! Their old enemy was still around wherever they went. So they had to fight them again.

A couple of centuries later, Queen Esther [an Israelite] and her husband, King Ahasuerus of Persia, had to put down another effort of Israel’s old enemy [Haman, an Agagite) to wipe out God’s people, Israel. It seems that old enemies who are not wiped out will be after us all the days and Ways of our lives. If you are being attacked by the same enemy over and over as you are walking the Way, you should know that the Lord is with you to utterly wipe out that old enemy and to put an end to the same old struggle. Have you identified your Amalekites?

1. Disciples of Jesus know that we are discipled 24/7. We are always in school and we learn every minute of every day. Those who were biblically astute noticed on May 15, 1948, the day that Israel became a nation in one day [Is. 66:7-9], that the scripture assigned for being read that day in every synagogue in the world and had been for centuries was Amos 9:11-15.
2. In God’s sacrifice system of the Old Testament, a priest, a descendant of Aaron, had to certify the acceptability of every sacrifice. Each animal had to be certified perfect. Before Jesus was sacrificed, He had to be certified perfect, without blemish, by a priest. John the Baptist was a priest, a descendant of Aaron, by way of both his mother and father. He certified that Jesus of Nazareth was the Lamb of God – John 1:29-34. God has all bases covered, does He not!
3. Christian vocabulary is specific but has lost much in translation from the originals. Sometimes, at the worst, the loss is due to efforts to be all-inclusive or neutral, but mainly the problem is that Hebrew words have meanings that we lose in translation. The Living Word meant what He said when He said it and how He said it, and still does. It is true that vera vocabula rerum amisimus.

Certainly, in English bibles we have enough for salvation, and more; but the originals were no dumb cave man crude etchings on stone. Every word and every number and every scenario were and are still loaded with eternal life-giving information, much of which is lost in translation. Fortunately, those meanings are being restored in these end times by those who are raised up to dig into new discoveries of old, well-hidden, life-giving material. All of us do not need to do the digging. Most of us just need to read, study, and pass it along. Consider reading “The Book of Mysteries” by Jonathan Cahn. You will be enriched.

1. One way to test the strength of sin in your life is to evaluate the exercise of your right to yourself. You might need to ask your closest friends to share their observation of your self-life. In any case, if you don’t score well don’t be discouraged. It is the Lord who has put us in this sad but hopeful situation in order to set us free from self and into the glorious freedom reserved for His children – Rom. 8:18-21. We are in a process called our sanctification. Where we are in the process may be painful at times but pain is a good motivator to come in out of the cold, heat, or struggle. We are the Lord’s workmanship. He is able.
2. In Romans 12:1-2 we are told to present our bodies, now, in this lifetime, to the Lord as a sacrificial act and ongoing life-style. Even the smallest earnest thought about doing exactly that confirms to us that our bodies are the most guarded things we have. With that insight, the Lord’s command to present our bodies as a sacrifice makes sense to even us humans. Doing it frees us from the temptation of being conformed to this world, from the world-focus and worldliness that so easily engulfs us. Doing it frees us to renew our minds so we can live as Christ, proving God’s will for us. His will is always good, acceptable, well-pleasing, and perfect. It is the Lord’s way to display Himself to the world, and to the struggling church. When we hear the call, we have three choices to choose from: 1) Don’t do it. 2) Do it enough to clean up our act so that we are acceptably “normal.” 3) Do it and continue doing it until we are taken out of this world for a short time of R, R and U [Rest, Rehabilitation and Upgrade]. Then we return with Him.
3. Once we are born again we have: 1) A changed heart [softened toward God and man] and 2) A mind that is susceptible to godly change. Few problems at that point are caused by our hearts, but our minds still have old habits and deficiencies of intellect, attitude, feelings, emotions, will, thought patterns, and the like. These have been freed by the indwelling Spirit of Christ and are now subject to change. We are given a responsibility, in fellowship with the Lord, to change them. That’s Romans 12:1-2 again. The mind doctors tell us that 15,000 to 20,000 thoughts pass through our minds every day, and that most are negative and self-centered. That presents us with adequate opportunity to work on this major project. It is a formidable task, but with God all things are possible.
4. The patriarch Jacob, son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, had 12 sons, Joseph being one of them. Jacob’s life was a stream of God’s blessings. The Lord was with him despite his poor character. He was God’s chosen leader of God’s people, chosen over his he-man older brother, Esau. Jacob was granted visions and dreams by the Lord. He had conversations with the Lord. Jacob was a spiritually blessed man and was a very successful businessman. His favorite son, Joseph, was his heir-apparent but when Joseph was 17 years old he was sold into slavery by his jealous bothers. You will recall that the brothers faked Joseph’s death by putting animal blood on Joseph’s easily-recognized coat and showing it to Jacob who decided that an animal had killed Joseph.

Enslaved in Egypt, Joseph rose to governor of all Egypt at age 30. After 7 years of good crops Joseph had the granaries full, which enabled them to survive the next 7 years which were very lean. During those 7 lean years Joseph’s family was reunited with him in Egypt. All went well thereafter for the remainder of their lives. But something devastating had happened to Jacob’s spiritual life [his functional relationship with the Lord] from the time of Joseph’s being sold into slavery, which was restored only when he learned that Joseph was alive! What is there to be learned from that story?

In Genesis 37:31-36 Jacob was given lying evidence that wrongly represented Joseph as being dead, and Jacob took the bait. At that point he dropped out of his life of faith and entered years of toxic grief. God previously had told him and the entire family that Joseph would rule over Jacob and all the family, but he ceased believing God’s plan when offered the lying evidence. From then, until over 20 years later, there is no record of Jacob receiving any word of any sort from the Lord. If the Lord spoke to Jacob, Jacob apparently did not hear. He had been given vital advance information but he did not hold to it in the time for its use. The result was a long time of spiritual insensitivity and death. Selah.

Finally, when Jacob heard and accepted the truth he began to live again. He had gone from walking with God, to 20 years of deep despair, to spiritual revival. In Genesis 45:26-28 he said: 1) “Enough of this living death.” 2) “The truth is that God’s word stood despite those contrary lies. My son is alive!” 3) “Let’s move forward out of the past miserable deception.”

What a lesson for us! The Lord always prepares us for our times of temptation and trial. It is our responsibility to remember the truth and apply it to our walk. Life in the kingdom is orderly and closely overseen by the Lord. All makes sense, whether the circumstances are “favorable” or not. As we take charge of our minds and remember the truth, the Lord’s army of overcomers qualify for the front lines.

1. Desert experiences are great, right? Awgh! No; on the flesh they are terrible. Yes; on the soul that is resting in the Lord they are great, indeed. The Lord told Moses, Moses told the Israelites, the Israelites passed it on to the church, and the church has passed it on to us – that there are wonderful and essential things for us in our desert experiences. In Deuteronomy 8:2-6 it is written: 1) You cannot possibly comprehend now how memorable an experience this is going to be, 2) I, the Lord, will be leading throughout the event and will be in total charge of every thing every day, 3) if you have not already noticed, cheer up because this is going to be an humbling experience, 4) and a bit testy [not a Sunday afternoon stroll through the park], 5) all being to inform you of the condition of your heart [which decides whether you will trust and obey Me]. 6) The testing will bring you into the dire circumstances of lacking food and water [necessities], 7) which I will supply so that you will know and live by My word [not by your own physical needs and abilities], 8) and become His overcoming, well-disciplined, mature sons, who 9) do not flip-out in the future. Great things are going on out here in the desert, are they not?
2. This Thought is an encouraging one and could be labeled “Seek and you shall find.” Or, it can be presented as a question: “Are there things that have been accomplished in you that you have lost? If so, seek them and you shall find them again.” The honest answer for every believer who has insight is, “Yes, I have lost an edge here and there.”

Paul pointed out to those faithful saints in Galatia that they had lost quality spirituality and fallen into living by Christian rules and laws – 3:all. He told those at Ephesus that saving faith is entirely a gift and work of God [Eph. 2:1-10]. He said they had done nothing to be saved and there was nothing they could do to become unsaved, much like a child born to parents did nothing to become their child and can do nothing to become not their child. The Lord loves us and we are His forever. We can turn back to the ways of the world but we are still God’s children.

On the other hand, perfecting faith [for our ongoing sanctification] is of grace plus something of cost and action of us. It’s His plan for our involvement, for which we are rewarded in this life and in the life hereafter. Perfecting faith takes us to the crosswalk but we are not forced to go on it. Peter speaks of our being born again of an imperishable seed, then urges us to live that way – 1 Pet. 1:22 🡪 2:12. When we do, we become good material for the Master Builder to use as He builds His church. Then Peter went on to talk about godly order, which is a very richly rewarded obedience and can be a very costly disobedience.

There are times when we become dull of hearing, meaning we had lost a previous clear and sharp spiritual hearing – Heb. 5:11 🡪 6:8. In verse 13, “the word of righteousness” means, in the least, that we had lost a living faith that had produced a righteous nature and behavior. Instead, the common opposite is either outright unrighteous living, or living by Judeo-Christian rules. The Lord points out that our diet is the cause of our problem. He says that we have been on a milk diet too long. Milk is defined in 6:1-8 as elementary teachings. Look at that list of elementary teachings to see if milk is what you have been receiving from your teachers and preachers. If you find yourself there, do something about it – even if for you it means canceling these THOUGHTS and moving up to better food.

One component to having an adult meat diet is to walk with other Christians who encourage and correct us through their godly living and by speaking into and about our lives. Our natural tendency is to slide into complacency instead of pressing on in faith, or to slide backwards onto a legalistic plateau. By walking closely with others who are on the same road we can reduce that tendency. A testimony: Two young men, previously unknown to us, came for a day-visit. They explained that they wanted to meet some older folks who had been in a remarkable spiritual revival and were still living that revival after [at that time] 40 years. We were then in our 70s. They were of the experience and opinion that folks simply and naturally dried up spiritually after some time. They were soon enlightened.

Having been raised up spiritually in the Charismatic Renewal of the 1960s and 1970s, we have remained in contact with many brothers and sisters with whom we had then shared real Life. Some have lost the spark of that Life. They need only a loving, insightful, brotherly visit, certainly not a shallow, good-ole-days, “cheer-up, everyone has tough times, better days are ahead” conversation. They need, want and respond to a revelatory visit from the Holy Spirit re: dealing with their declining physical health, perception of the Lord’s ongoing presence and activities, still being full-time and productive in Jesus’ ministry, results-producing living, words for their adult children and grandchildren, etc. -- things that come to light while listening to them and to the Lord. I enjoy those visits myself, often. They can be called “ketchup visits.”

It is so easy for the flesh to slip into our walk with the Lord, causing us to at least lose our Holy Spiritual edge and settle into worldliness and dry religion [true doctrine without Life] – Rev. 3:1-6. When you see yourself doing that, don’t try to stir things up; but do thank the Lord for showing you yourself, repent, move closer to the Lord, and praise Him because He is always worthy of praise. He is the only one who can awaken that genuine stuff stored in you. He is faithful to those whom He has called. Seek and you shall find.

1. Most know the story of the mountain climber who fell off of a high cliff, managed to grab hold of a 1” ledge, hanged there for a few seconds while he appraised the hopeless situation, and decided to pray for help. He said, “Oh, Lord, help me now!” A voice came clearly, “Let go and I will lift you up.” The climber did not like the order of 1) let go, and 2) then I will lift you up. He had nothing to lose but could not bring himself to first let go. His next prayer was, “Is there anyone else up there?”

For 3,000 years the saints have wrestled with that same message: “.. He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” – Jam. 4:6-7. The message is that first we have to give up, then He will move into the process. We want to resist the enemy [human, spiritual, or natural] while calling on the Lord to take over and win the battle before we let go, but it is foundational in everything we do that we first be submitted to the Lord and to proper humans and natural situations. That is challenging until we have tasted the love and greatness of God.

1. With such glorious advance notice given in the Bible, we know that wonderful things are ahead, at least for some saints. In order to qualify for higher rewards, we must now go lower. Promises like, 1) “He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father” [Rev. 2:26-27]. 2) “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne” [Rev. 3:21]. 3) “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth” [Rev. 5:10]. 4) “If we endure, we will also reign with Him” [2 Tim. 2:12(b)].

This and more press upon us the truth that we are to be little people [to ourselves] before we can be overcomers with Jesus. Now is not our time to exert our will over others, but to go low. Humility is powerful when mixed with soul-gold like love and faith. The Lord’s authority is not found in titles or positions. Taking the low seat is a display of powerful humility. We are being prepared for leadership in Jesus’ kingdom on earth, and our Mentor is leading us to go low.

1. The daily purpose of a disciple of Jesus Christ is to become more sensitive to and dependent upon the Holy Spirit. I am impressed by how spiritual so much of our common life practices are, meaning that they involve taking a bath, cleaning up our way of speaking and choice of words, asking others [friends and foes] for their opinion of us, choice of friends, choosing a different job, keeping our cars clean inside and out [like our bodies], not being a lone ranger, being keepers of our word [such as by being on time], and many other simplicities. Those common things are very spiritual.
2. It has been suggested that people are looking for a church that offers: 1) Street life or drive by, where they can zip in and out without commitment to or from the church. 2) An orphanage, where the leaders change from time to time without solid kindred associations. Or, 3) A family, where relationships are deep, warm and permanent. Have you, like myself, tasted all three of those stages? Where are you now?
3. Under the heading of, “Wait A Minute, Just Let Me Explain Myself,” compare yourself with, 1) Adam to God in Genesis 3:12, 2) Eve to God in Genesis 3:13, 3) Aaron to Moses in Exodus 32:22-24, and 4) Saul to Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:13-21. Those verses are like mirrors, are they not? See Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11.
4. Have you noticed how difficult it is to have a relaxed conversation with a narrow-minded person? You have to avoid certain topics, it’s so easy to slide into argumentativeness, and it’s simply uncomfortable. The solution: Love them enough to let them choose the topic, you be as agreeable factually as is possible until they relax, then strengthen their strong points. In my experience that takes time, understanding, and a genuine appreciation of aspects of their position and how they came to it. Strong friendships can start that way; weak relationships can be strengthened that way. It’s the way of love.

You know that Christians have a very narrow-minded religion, don’t you? Jesus said He is the only way to the Father – Matt. 7:14, John 10:9, Acts 4:12. We understand that to mean there is no other way to be saved, to avoid hell, to go to heaven, to be with the Lord forever, including that there is no other way via any of the other religions or non-religions. That is very narrow, is it not? But we have to deal with its truth, not try to enlarge the door. There is no way to appropriate the Lord’s victory at the cross without entering in through Him.

1. If you are looking for the working of a new thing of the Lord in your life, let me say something that will help you identify it when He does it. When He does it, it will not be a new thing to the Lord and possibly not new to you. But if it seems to be an entirely new thing to you, it will have been something He has done millions of times for others. It will be a return to an original. As such, it will be a stamp of validity on what He has done in the past and a fresh announcement that what He has done for others He has done again for you. And, once again, will come the revelation that it is the right and only way and is always available.
2. There are many ways to speak of God’s one purpose for us. One is that Jesus is life’s goal for us. To be intimate with Him is His purpose fulfilled. That’s our path to maturity and completeness. The less we focus on things and become focused on Him, the more progress we make in our only purpose for being here.
3. A reflection: After 54 years of walking with the Lord, I very much appreciate the love and sacrifice of many people, some who already have gone into glory and many who are still awaiting our promotion. Those relationships were wonderful; not perfect, but wonderful. We offered our selves to the Lord, then to one another. Some did that in reverse order but came to the same walk as the others.

It was good that we were focused on our walk because some transitory results were lacking, meaning that our love offering to the Lord and to one another as His little children was remarkable but tarnished from time to time. In our hearts we loved one another, pleased one another and pleased the Lord. Those relationships have persisted and will persist. Praise the Lord!

Some are on this mailing list. I love you without having to abolish any thoughts of your or my imperfections. God is good [and perfect] and so are you [although yet imperfect]. We were united with Him in a life, service, and death like His, so we shall definitely be united with Him in a resurrection like His – Rom. 6:5. Our life together is getting only started. We shared in His suffering [some caused by ourselves] and we shall share in His glory [some contributed to by us].

1. Some thoughts and questions from the church toward Jesus, our Head: 1) Why don’t you bless the things we do for you? 2) We always do them for you, don’t we? 3) We are not at all interested in getting the credit, although it would be good to be recognized for the things we do for you from time to time. 4) We prayed about it before we did it. 5) So, why do not your blessing lay upon our labors? 6) You said you would build your church, and that is what we are trying to do. [Now we are getting warm!]. 7) At times it appears that you have hidden yourself from us and abandoned us in our labors for you. [Right, and Bingo!]

Examples of the Lord hiding Himself, or something of Himself, from others: 1) Matthew 11:25 – He hid His best things from the worldly wise and intelligent of His people because they would reject or misuse them. 2) Luke 9:45; 18:34 – Even from His disciples He concealed the ability to understand essentials when they would have rejected or misused them. 3) Luke 19:42 – He concealed the truth from those to whom He had been sent, because they did not know Him or His ways, or wanted to use Him for their own purposes. That is an ongoing problem, not only a problem of the people of His day.

The problem is that Jesus said He will build His church, but we of the church do the church building. We have little idea of what it is for Jesus to do the building while we follow along according to His blueprint, leadership, and enabling. When we do it our way, He hides Himself. It’s not always a 0% or 100% situation, but often a mixture of our doing the building and His doing the building. But when the church has fallen into the hands of the church, which it has, the problem is that we do the building and hope He will show up during times when we see that we need Him.

He said that the church He built [His ongoing work] would break down the gates of hell – Matt. 16:18. Look about us. Do you notice that distinctive mark of Jesus on the church, that we are breaking down the gates of hell? No; instead, hell has broken into the church and we don’t recognize the devil’s distinctive mark on us! Examples: 1) Hell has erected walls between God’s people. We have rejected the bond of peace that is necessary to preserve our God-given unity in Him – Eph. 4:1-6. 2) We don’t know His ways, which means our hearts are unbelieving and our minds are uneducated. There is no way the present at-large church can enter into that which He has been offering us – Heb. 3 and 4.

Jesus knows what is going on, and He knows what He is doing. He is building church. He is not building Baptist or Catholic or Lutheran or Pentecostal churches [keep reading]. He is building only His church. His church can have any language, any color skin, any label and all kinds of semi-accurate doctrines, but He is building only His church. His church is focused on Jesus, not on things about Jesus, and not on things about things about Jesus.

We are building those out-of-focus things. When we want Him to build [or help us build] our churches, He doesn’t help by building our church. But wherein it is His church, He will build. When we make the non-essentials into essentials, or make our religiosity into essentialities, we are on our own. The results show us who is the builder, but we can see that only if we use His Handbook to compare the church’s present condition to the Master Architect’s blueprint. They bear little resemblance. Take a good look.