THOUGHTS OF JANUARY, 2019

1. We are in good hands beyond our imagination. The plan is beyond us, the doing of it is beyond us, and its perfect fulfillment is f-a-a-r-r beyond us. However, we are part of it! Much more could be said, but the summation as far as I am concerned is, “It is beyond us.” Yet, but only for the simple, it can be enlarged to: “Everything is of Jesus Christ, everything is done through Jesus Christ, and everything is being gathered into Jesus Christ.” Paul said it this way [through many interpreters and translators from him to us]: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things” – Rom. 11:36 (b). Relax. Just do what Jesus says. [When there’s a rub, that’s it, isn’t it!]
2. There is a crafty warning to those of us who like to lay back from the task more than we should. It goes, “If you are not at the table, you are on the menu.” That’s a sharp little nudge.
3. The persecuted ones’ first request always seems to be for prayer, no matter how desperate they are in their common temporal conditions. How do you pray for our missionaries and for our persecuted brothers and sisters mostly around the third world? If your prayers tend to be general, instead of specific, it may be because you are not informed or involved enough to be specific. Here are some specific areas for prayers:

1) That they experience the Lord’s presence by faith and feel – Heb. 13:5.

2) That they will see and enter the doors opened for them by the Lord – Col. 4:3.

3) That they forgive and love their persecutors as they are being persecuted – Matt. 5:44.

4) That they will experience the joy of the Lord, especially amid suffering – Acts 5:41.

5) That they will know that you and other believers are praying for them – 2 Tim. 1:3.

If you are not receiving news of the persecuted church, there are organizations that can help you meet that need. “The Voice of the Martyrs” and “Asia Harvest” are two such quality missionary organizations. They are serious about Jesus and His words. You will be in the harvest field by linking with them.

1. If you are one who calculates your expectations, have you identified your earth-life expectations from following Jesus? The place to start is with what He said you should expect. There are verses in the Gospels that go directly to that topic. Summed up, you will be subjected to the assaults of the devil, harsh environments of all types, the misunderstandings of friends and family, the loss of family and material possessions, and physical infirmities and possible martyrdom. And those are only “tests.” They probably are not high on your [nor my] wish list but they bring rewards for walking with Jesus. And they themselves are rewards; we have been blessed to suffer with Him.

So, why must the righteous suffer? The answer: “So we can move from knowing about Jesus into knowing, hearing, and seeing Him – Job 42:5. The disciples’ walk takes us from believers who have heard about Him, into knowing Him. In the “fellowship of His suffering” we are polished into His likeness. We don’t have to look for suffering, just walk with Him. The things that happened to Him will happen to us. Millions of our brothers and sisters are currently being polished in that way.

1. A mixed group of well-wishers and fault-finders gathered around Jesus, asking Him why His disciples did not perform the traditional act of purifying their hands before they ate – Mark 7:1-23. Their hand washing had nothing to do with washing their hands of grime and germs before eating; theirs was a religious tradition, a religious ritual. While they were on the topic, they included other questions about religious traditions that involved food preparation and eating according to their other religious traditions. They had noticed that Jesus and His disciples were not very religious.

His response? He called them hypocrites, adding that they honored God with their lips while they dishonored Him in their hearts. They were prompt to teach the precepts of men while worshipping God in vain. Don’t you know that they were blind and deaf when He said that! Then He gave them examples of how they neglected the commandments of God while holding to the traditions of men, adding that they did many things such as that. He hung their dirty linen up before them and still they didn’t see it. Why? Because they thought that their religion, as it was, was God-instituted, God-directed, God-aimed, and God-approved.

Then I looked around at myself and the church, seeing how we meticulously and repetitiously perform religious acts while living and teaching contrary to the Lord’s word – not knowing, not caring, and thus not changing. Jesus says we are defiling [desecrating, diverting from sacred to carnal] ourselves/our souls – verses 14-23. However we may want to misunderstand that, it’s not good and it has eternal consequences. Besides, worshiping Him in vain would be a near-fatal shock if we saw only the half of it.

Those few sentences can wrangle up lots of challenges, can they not, about righteous and unrighteous judgment, splitting congregations vs. leaving sheep among wolves, and “who knows what is best in religious matters?” Jesus’ word into that sort of situation was, “.. do and observe what they [religious leaders] tell you, but do not do according to their deeds ..” – Matt. 23:1-3. In other words, “Don’t wreck the organization, just don’t be like them.” That strengthens His teaching on not putting new wine [new outpourings of the Holy Spirit] into old wine skins [staid religious institutions] because the old wine skins will split and be ruined [don’t wreck the institution], and the wine [renewing work of the Holy Spirit] will be lost – Matt. 9:17.

I will add to that the sad truth that the traditional churches are so often a part of the world that believers are sent into to live in and to preach the gospel, and to make disciples. In doing that, if the life and work of the Holy Spirit is not accepted, the Lord doesn’t want to split the church. [Imagine that!] We should either stay and be a life and voice for change, or withdraw in as much peace as possible, leaving them to the Lord and His grace.

Then we are reminded that the Lord told His disciples to follow one of two courses after having presented the Gospel: 1) Give them His blessings if they accepted the word, or 2) leave them behind, shaking the dust off of our feet if our word was rejected – Matt. 10:14. So, we have some guidelines, but there is no substitute for our listening to Him. Jesus and Paul certainly had years of opportunity for handling that situation and they, especially Paul, did it both ways.

1. If [meaning “because”] the devil has been defeated by Jesus Christ, what are we occupiers to do? We need to keep wearing our armor so we can withstand his threats, so we won’t yield ground when he growls like a lion – Eph. 6:13. Paul said “stand firm,” don’t run, don’t hide -- then listed our weapons of truth, righteousness, peace, faith, (the assurance of) salvation, the word of God, and prayer. Those are the weapons of occupiers. They are effective after the battle has been won, when the occupiers are to stand. What additionally were the weapons of the One who won the battle? How about perfect love and obedience in the face of martyrdom?
2. It is a privilege to follow the Lord through the valley of the shadow of death and onward out of the tough times into victory, is it not? But how about following Him into the tough times when everything has been going well for us and we don’t have to take that difficult downward road, again!? But we deliberately choose it because we know it is “our calling;” knowing the danger and harm we could incur to ourselves and possibly to others in our obedience.

We talk well of following Him in His crosswalk into death to self and into living the resurrected Life, and indeed it is the Life that we look for, not the death. BUT, when we are right and “they” are wrong, when we have done nothing or little wrong and they are the real culprits, when instead all could now go well if we stomped our foot and stood our ground, when we need a well-deserved rest because we have been carrying the load for others – but now is the hour for the power of darkness to have his way over us. Will we then follow Jesus into the darkness?

Read Luke 22:53 (b), “.. but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.” He understood, Job understood [2:10; 13:15], Joseph understood [Gen. 50:20], and millions of other saints have understood that the way up commonly follows first the downward path and we either have to choose it, or accept it when it is pressed upon us, or rebel. Be encouraged by Luke 14:11; Philippians 2:8; James 4:10; and 1 Peter 5:5-7.

1. Jesus made a definite statement in John 15:16 and it very probably applies to us as well as to those disciples: “You did not choose Me but I chose you, ..” Was it true for them because they were seeking the truth, or because the Lord was seeking them? Is it true for us because we were seeking the truth, or the Lord was seeking us? Were any of us chosen because of our seeking and spiritual hunger, or because He was drawing us to Him? Was it a combination of that and more, or was its basic beginning due to anything in or originating from us? We don’t need to know that answer, but I will accept that He choose us, no matter how it appeared to play-out thereafter. My “evidence,” is that He came to seek His own, to seek and save the lost, He chose His disciples [not they Him], those who seek Him discover that they are sought by Him, He reveals Himself to those who seek Him, and He searches for them in order to make Himself known by them. My best insight is that I was lost and blind, not seeking Him, and He came to me with an offer of His Life for my life that I could not decline.
2. Christian involvement in politics is often a difficult or perplexing topic, and the intensity of our involvement may change from political season to season. The Lord said to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s, but He did not give details on how to separate the two. Over the years I have swayed from political involvement to non-involvement like a pendulum. Perhaps that meant that I was on course. We are told to judge all things, and politics are part of all things; sometimes a large part. Speak up or not speak up; contribute or not contribute, vote or not vote, winning side or losing side. We may be persuaded that the Lord was with us [and our Christian candidate], then the other candidate [the scoundrel] wins. Probably an important ingredient is to not lose our souls while fighting our political battles.

So, let’s ease into some politics. I don’t know where these statistics came from originally, but it is reported that we are one pound heavier after the holidays, that 40% of Americans and 30% of adults in the UK are obese, that certain physician groups are asking politicians to increase taxes on sugar-sweetened food and drinks, and that some physician groups want to classify obesity as a disease, not a behavioral choice. Whatever happened to gluttony, the fifth of the seven deadly sins?

Even in medical school [in the 1950s, in my case] we knew that the ability to easily lose weight was variable among the populace, that starving people absolutely lost weight and gluttonous people got fat. And that some thin, healthy people had difficulty gaining weight while some fat, healthy people had difficulty losing weight, but could. Caloric intake was the one common factor to weight loss or gain. Self-responsibility [self-control, Galations 5:23] was and is still taught as a non-medicinal therapy for myriads of problems, weight control included, although social and political solutions continue being suggested causes, not just influences. It was said: “Society caused those two adult young men to murder their parents,” so they were found innocent of their premeditated deed. That has led many to ask, “Whatever happened to sin and justice?”

For 20 years, global dietary supply adequacy has risen in an almost unbroken climb. That is wonderful. Only socialist governments and war-torn areas have resisted this worldwide improvement. If you want some documentation on that, the average Venezuelan lost 24 pounds in a single year recently due to what some dubbed “the Maduro diet.” The nation simply did not have enough food to maintain their citizens’ weight. Armed with such information, socialists took another quick left turn and have begun blaming free enterprise for obesity, meaning that because the scarcity of food causes weight loss, the availability of food in free enterprise countries must be the cause of obesity. Guilt by association.

Again, the “obesity is a disease” claim fails. Self-destructive choices are newly invented bogymen for other factors. False medical diagnoses cannot remove the passion, sin, and obesity of gluttony.

“Socialism is the religion people get when they lose their religion” – Richard John Neuhaus. The Lord gets very political when He says for us to not put our faith in political [or medical or etc.] leaders, even when they are our personally elected leaders. That’s Psalm 146, which in part reads: “Do not trust in princes, in mortal man .. How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, ..” But the political answer is soon coming. When King Jesus and the overcomers [Rev. 3:21] sit on His throne in Jerusalem He and they will reign over the nations. The nations will still be politically functional and will gradually be brought into sync with Him. Then we will experience real politics in every part of life and society.

1. This is perhaps to put a finishing touch on our presentation of “the gospel.” It seems that Jesus meant “the good news of the presence of the absolute dominion of God” when He preached the gospel. And He taught the disciples with Him to preach the same good news. He sent them out during His years with them, and that’s the dominion gospel they preached. Yes, after the cross, Jesus and His “once and for all accomplished work on the cross” became part of the good news, but we can cheapen it by omitting the kingdom part that He and they talked about for three years.

It is a central part of the good news that Jesus established a kingdom of dominion and strength and obedience here in this world. For those three years He prepared the disciples to preach that powerful aspect of the “good news of God’s kingdom.” It was good news that we have a new situation, a new and absolute citizenship, a portable [into all the world’s nations] citizenship with a King who is with us everywhere fulltime, and that all authority has been granted Him.

A problem exists, that we can [or think we can] run across the “kingdom’s border” to Jesus for forgiveness of sins but not stay there to live as a citizen under His dominion. To the preaching of the cross of Christ, add full personal submission to the King. More on this in Thought No. 14.

1. We have many good reasons for following the Lord, but only one will enable us to go “all the way” with Him. Here are some reasons: 1) What He can do for us. 2) What He actually does for us. 3) Enjoyment of His occasional blessing. 4) Enjoyment of His many blessings. 4) He supplies many of my needs. 5) He supplies all my needs. 6) He offers His spiritual gifts. 7) He has given me His spiritual gifts. 8) He is my Bread of Life.

I have followed Him for all of those reasons, and He has at times trimmed them down to No. 8 alone. It was a wonderful and settling occasion when I finally told Him that He did not need to do another thing for my benefit, because I would love Him and follow Him for His sake. Yet, I know that He continues doing many necessary things [plus extra blessings] so that I may follow Him. But it is good to have those times alone with Him when I can speak rock-bottom truth.

1. What is the evidence of having been forgiven and pardoned by the Lord? Answer: Peace. Unconfessed and unrepentant sin is a prime reason why, for example, we don’t have the peace needed to know, or to wait for, God’s will for us. A peaceful and clean conscience is essential for hearing God among our self-will and those other loud, pushy voices.
2. What is it that determines your relationship with others? Today’s answer: How your Spiritual vitality matches with the Spiritual vitality of your others. If you are alive spiritually, expect to do well with others who are alive spiritually, and if you are not alive spiritually, expect to do well with others who are not alive spiritually. No surprises there.

But there are other answers, and they are costly. A person alive in the Lord can do very well among unbelievers, even among disbelievers and counter-believers. To a large extent it depends on his or her level of humility. Humility pulls the tiger’s teeth, sooths the rancor of opponents, creates accord and fellowship, and promotes intellectual tolerance and agreement. In other words, humility opens ears, clears vision, and softens hearts. Not incidentally, it also pleases the Lord.

As the Lord lifts the humble, so has the heart of in-His-image humanity been created to do the same. By way of testimony I will say that as the Lord elevates the humble, pride crouches at the door, desiring us, and we must master it – Gen. 4:7. Popular verses for prideful and humble saints are Matthew 18:3-6; 23:12; James 4:10; and 1 Peter 5:6-8.

1. Jesus went about preaching the good news [gospel] of the kingdom of God [Matt. 4:23], then He told us to go preach the same message, the good news of the kingdom, until He returns – Matt. 24:14. However, in the epistles, the gospel of the kingdom of God is hardly mentioned. Instead, what is preached to the world is the message [that Jesus could not preach, it having not yet been accomplished for His use], the message of Jesus and the cross.

That message [rightly] was and is the message of the church, but something of the gospel of the kingdom has been weakened or neglected during the transition and our preaching. That part of the message is that God fully reigns, presently from above through faith and, in the near future, on earth from Jerusalem. I am thinking of the full authority and dominion of God over His believers [not a happy topic among non-disciplined believers] and through them in the world. That means that we should be taught and be searching the scriptures to learn the truth of kingdom life, be watchful for ourselves and others getting out of order/breaking rank, and be seeking the Lord’s spiritual leadership for ourselves and our leaders. In short, we have been light on knowing the King’s way and obeying Him, called “the fear of the Lord,” or “loving the Lord with a pure heart.”

1. “You are a new species of being that has never existed before.” That describes the born-again Christian, no matter how he/she feels, thinks or acts at times. No wonder that spiritual babes are so “out of this world.” You have read that sentence many times before, in your Bible, which reads like, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away; behold [“just open your eyes and it will be obvious” – ed.], all things have become new” – 2 Cor. 5:17. It is thought by some that “the initial flush” or “the honeymoon” will soon be over and the new Christian will settle down to being a “normal person” again, hopefully with better behavior than before being born-again. How can that low expectation be true?! We are a new species of being that has never existed before! We became a righteous creation with the nature of God! Walk by faith in that which the Lord says about you. He is right! He is also right in Romans 8:1-17.
2. All of us know the truth of Philippians 4:4-9, where Paul wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Daily you are experiencing the truth of those powerful words – powerful because they were and are by the Holy Spirit and are the testimony of Paul and of yourself. Corrie Ten Boom put her testimony of the reality of those words this way, “If you look at the world, you will be distressed. If you look within, you’ll be depressed. If you look at God you will be at rest.” I will offer additional words that could be chosen for ending her last sentence: refreshed, impressed, relieved, restored, revived, relaxed and repaired. You have additional ones.

1. Theology is a good thing unless it interferes with the Lord’s work in and through us. Theology is formulated, hopefully from what God says, to prevent our wandering into error and for us to maintain spiritual purity. A problem develops when we think that we have the complete mind of God, and He begins doing something new [to us and to our theology], but not new to scriptures that we thought we had accurately and finally “nailed.” At that point the religious tend to hold to their theology, reject God’s timely renewal of biblical life by the Spirit, and start drying up. Humility is not a strong point with Pharisees, but firmly held theology to their detriment is.
2. Proverb 12:25 reads, “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.” That has been interpreted to be the Lord’s insight into the cause of depression, or perhaps the cause of some types of depression. I practiced medicine for perhaps 20 years before medical antidepressants were available, and could see a large difference between those depressed patients who had a living faith in the Lord and those who did not. Those with faith had Life and Truth in them along with their depressed emotions; the others had no Life and rejected Truth, having only their depressed emotions. How much theology they knew apparently did not help; but whether they knew Jesus was Lord and adhered to Him carried them onward.
3. The question has been asked, “How did the twelve disciples [including Judas] do miraculous things by the Spirit when they were not born again [thus did not have the Holy Spirit within them] and the Holy Spirit was not yet poured out on believers [Acts 2]? Answer: Jesus shared of His Spiritual anointing with them [Jesus “gave them authority over unclean spirits” – Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1], which He Himself had received after being water baptized by John the Baptist. That happened often in the Old Testament, as He [who was to be born as Jesus of Nazareth] anointed many with His Spirit [in the Old Testament]. The more we see the concealed New Testament in the Old Testament, the more we realize that there is nothing entirely new in the New Testament, only fulfillments and more prophecies.
4. Here is a Thought to chew on. Jesus worked among those who believed in the one true God, those known as Jews, Hebrews, and followers of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was instructed by His Father to not go among others [the Gentiles], so His contact with rank unbelievers when He was an adult was incidental but fruitful when it did occur. The record indicates that personally He could have turned “the world right side up” if He had been “turned loose.”

That would have been short-range gain and long-range failure. He could have lived a normal human life-span and spread His gospel, minus the message of His cross and its power. His work among the Jews [of varying degrees of faith] was to preach the absolute reign of God and to make disciples of them, in preparation for those Jewish disciples going to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. With that personally restrictive commission from His Father, He was not to make converts or disciples from among the Gentiles. But He did see that the Gentile world harvest was ripe. That quick shortcut must have been a strong temptation, until He received the bigger picture.

Along that line, I have a question. The Lord selects those who are called to salvation. Perhaps we, like was Jesus, should be more attentive to whom we are called, in order to give ourselves to those who are the called and shake the dust of the others from our feet. [That sounds mean, doesn’t it, but it’s what Jesus taught His disciples to do. Are we obedient disciples?] The Lord Jesus’ Great Commission told us to go everywhere and make disciples [not focusing on bringing the lost to salvation], calling them to obedience to everything He had said. Is it possible for us to walk that walk? That would be a great departure from the present focus.

1. If we will be with the Lord we will have something to say – Mark 3:14. And we will have a Life to live – Col. 3:1-4. And will have a place to go and have things to do – Matt. 28:19-20. And we will know who and Whose we are – 2 Tim. 1:12. We may be sojourners, but will have a home that warms our hearts – 1 Pet. 1:17-21. Being with Jesus is the project. It is a spiritual thing, and has a psyche-changing impact.

By way of testimony, being with someone is like Nancy was with me when we dated, from our first date. Yes, she was warm and soft of body and soul but she was with me to the exclusion of other people, attractions and distractions. She was not with me to do or see something, but to be with me. In that sense, early-on we were one. I didn’t know how to describe it at the time, but she was comfortably “mine” when we were together and I became “her’s.” I had to grow into that, and did. She had her own life, friends, college courses, etc. but when she was with me I knew it and my life was different. I was being changed. We experienced being one from the time of our first date, without marriage and physical intimacy entering my mind.

In due course, I knew that I wanted to be with her full-time and permanently. Being with someone honors and encourages them, and makes available to the other that which you are. All of life changes when you are with someone or others that way. That’s what happened to Jesus and those disciples, and to the many who were part-time disciples. Jesus was [in personality] and had [from His lips] the words of Life. The disciples knew that from day one, but could not put it into words until much later. They became a unit, without compulsion and without [much] thought of what was in it for themselves. They left all and followed Him, to be with Him.

Judas was the exception among the twelve. He was in it for what He could make of and get from it for Israel and himself. Personal benefit was his focus. He lost. He had nowhere to go, was a nobody, a loser with nothing gained from his three years of being with but not with.

1. A word about not being discouraged when you get a “sign” from the Lord that something is about to happen or has happened, but time has passed and “it has not happened.” Signs are not always for something that is going to be obvious immediately. Consider that the star that led the Maggi to King Jesus in Bethlehem was right-on – the sign and the event. But, it was 33 more years before He was established [by faith] as the King of the Jews, and 2,000 more years [at this time] before He is established by earth experience as the King of the world. Very much happens, even in our midst, that we don’t see. Believe that which the Lord says.
2. How exceedingly wonderful would be the church [and the world], and how pleasant would be our lives if we Christians would function as one body, dwelling together in unity. Of course, we have been made to be different parts in different places functioning different ways. That’s the way a healthy body is made to function. We are probably more healthy than we understand, but we are not really good at deliberately working together. The less the pressure on us, the less we work together; the more the pressure on us, the more and better we work together. It seems that we don’t need one another in our perceived “good times,” even though that is when the Lord would synchronize us better. Oh, the value of trials and persecutions!

Do we know and enjoy the body function of the church congregation down the street? How are we to function in regards to them in our everyday lives? Do we love them and they us? How does Christ’s love between us show as Christ’s love? Abundantly and sacrificially? Do they depend upon us for ingredients of life and service? Do we behave as good neighbors by borrowing necessary ingredients for that which you and the Lord are cooking-up at your place, then sharing the finished product, saying, “The Lord has set the members, each one of them [including us], in the body just as He pleased” – 1 Cor. 12:18. Spiritual oneness is meant to show as unity – John 17:20-26; Eph. 4:1-6. Everything we are and do, everything we are not and don’t do, affects that neighboring congregation – 1 Cor 12:26. We don’t know and/or we don’t care enough to do something about living the truth.

That again shows us the consistent wisdom of God’s starting place for us -- conviction and repentance. Simply making efforts to improve is building on sand; the improvements will not stand. Repent. “Go down.” Go down to bedrock, and we will stand against the present gale and coming storm. Islands will be swamped; the church united will stand.

1. There is lots of power in simple things, like “keeping order.” Keeping in order among those of equal personage but of inequality of rank is so very simple but is contaminated by self-centeredness. For one thing, we cannot keep rank if we are looking only at ourselves. We must look at, be aware of, know the responsibilities of, and the current difficulties of those who are to keep rank with us. We have to know their positions relative to us and cooperate with them in their efforts. We are not in a world by ourselves when “marching.”

Scripture is full of instructions for keeping rank. Two groups of Israelis were known for keeping rank – 1 Chron. 12:33, 36 (KJV). Here’s a list for order keeping for us, with some relevant scripture and comments:

1. Woman to Man to Christ to God. “.. 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. Basic, isn’t it. It doesn’t speak of relative intelligence or maturity between man and woman, nor of importance, but of God’s will for being able to function according to the Manufacturer. Man and woman are different more than in their bodies. We have distinctly different souls and are made to function entirely differently than our sexual counterpersons.
2. Man to woman – From Genesis 2:18, he is her leader, originator, guide, director, conductor, head, commander, authority, and possibly provider and protector.
3. Woman to man – Also from Genesis 2:18, she is his helper, proper helper, helpmeet, helpmate, cooperator, collaborator, accomplice, upholder, advocate, and the one person given to prevent him from becoming a-lone-r. She is also his crown, adornment, completer, “finishment,” and reward – Prov. 12:4.
4. Husband to wife – In Ephesians 5, Paul, having already told the husbands [as they overheard what he said to the wives about them in verses 22-24] that they were the head of their wives like Christ is the head of the church, and that they were responsible for developing, nurturing, and raising them up as they submitted to their husbands in everything. In verses 25-33 they were shown the way to be and the cost of being husbands. In 1 Peter 3:7 the husbands have to understand their wives, how their souls and bodies work differently than their own, realize that she has been created weaker in aspects of her soul and body, and that she is his equal before God. Read it, guys. Live it and watch God’s grace, including in our prayers.
5. Wives to husbands – Ephesians 5:22-24 -- Your submission to the Lord is to be mirrored in your submission to your husband, but don’t forget that sin is a matter between God and each individual. If your husband [or anyone else] wants you to sin, don’t do it. Human authority on sin does not over-ride God’s authority. But notice the extent of your submission to your husband, “in everything.” But there is a problem in: “.. as the church is subject to Christ.” The church often picks and chooses its obedience, sometimes in ignorance. Wives have a difficult time rising above the obedience level of the church. In 1 Peter 3:1-6, the Lord promises abundant grace toward your wayward husband, who will be changed by your non-verbal, respectful behavior to him.
6. Parents to children – Ephesians 6:4 holds fathers [parents] responsible for developing healthy attitudes in their children, while disciplining and instructing them in the Lord, meaning in Him personally and in His word and ways.
7. Children to parents – Ephesians 6:1-3 lays out the rightness and the reward for obeying your parents – long life. Long life does not mean much to little children, but that promise begins to grip the child when he/she has enough self-responsibility and self-control to engage his/her parents adequately.
8. Church leaders to other members – 1 Peter 5:1-4 – It is Christ’s flock, not your flock! Shepherd it free of earthly and soulish benefits. Have the sheep live as you live – Heb. 13:7.
9. Other members to church leaders – Hebrews 13:17 – Obey your leaders and submit to them. If they are having troubles with your leaders, stick with it, don’t jump to another church because there you will encounter the same opportunities to grow. Stay in there, planted by the Lord.
10. Civil government to citizens – Romans 13:3-4 – Don’t govern by fear, except to those who are evil doers. Be a blessing to the righteous.
11. Citizens to civil government – Romans 13:1-7 – Be in subjection to civil government on all levels because they have been put in place by the Lord. They will be for your benefit when you do what is good. Even its persecution of you will be beneficial to you when you take it as being purposed from the Lord. Bless those who persecute you.
12. Birth is the necessary beginning of Life, not the fullness of that which our Father has for us. That’s true in the natural and spiritual. So, we must be born again [John 3:3, 5] before we can see and enter into the kingdom of God. His desire is that all men be 1) saved and 2) come to the knowledge of the truth – 1 Tim. 2:4. We enter the gate of the spiritual world in a moment, and have the remainder of our earthen path to come to a fuller knowledge of Jesus – Matt. 7:13-14. Birth is the beginning of Life, not the goal. Having babies and being a baby is so easy, but our making disciples/adults of them is our life-long project – Matt. 28:18-20.
13. General George S. Patton was a strong leader of the Allied armies in Europe during World War II. I mention him because he was often bombastic and strong-willed. He got the job accomplished, the enemy feared him, and he was used in places where his temperament was advantageous. After the war he was put back “into storage.”

Companies, cities, etc. have need of such people, those who are needed only when there is a problem to be fixed, meaning firemen, police, etc. In God’s kingdom things are arranged similarly. These are special people who are needed when something goes wrong and the others do not see it or cannot correct it. For these special people, the righteous status quo is their time to rest, sleep, and go on family vacations. However, when something breaks down, they spring into action. They recognize the problem, where it is, who is doing it, and know what to do about it. They are focused, specialized, to the point, and can really get “in your face.”

They are the ones who “cause trouble” along with the usual trouble makers but these fade into the peaceful flock when they are heard and the fault is corrected. [The usual trouble makers never stop complaining. Their unending ministry is called “tester“ and is valuable to the body of Christ when understood and appreciated.] In the Old Testament the official ones were known as prophets. To call them “pushy” is just a starter. They were often called “negative,” were true radicals and sometimes were violent. Their spiritual ministry did not make them automatically and perfectly righteous, but their words were life-giving when heeded.

They were men set apart; their friends few. They were most often persecuted and occasionally martyred. If they were appreciated, it was often after they died. If they did their job well, those who knew them either hated them or loved them – no middle ground. The pastoral ministry could not and cannot get along without them, but usually thinks it can, so becomes the front line of resistance to the prophetic when Christ’s larger ministry [Eph. 4:11] is not present or is not functioning in Christ’s love.

Are you among those who think the prophetic ministry is not needed, and that it is usually off-base when you are exposed to it?

1. So, for the time being, the definition of human life as in relation to having an abortion, lies in the hands of the mother. If she doesn’t want her baby, it is deemed not a child. If she wants her baby, it is deemed a child. The baby’s life depends on the quality of its mother and in which legal jurisdiction they live. What a mess of a world kingdom we live in! Work and pray; trust and obey. Life and death is considerably in our hearts.
2. Those which are called “faith lessons” are learned by going through trials while staying on course, meaning doing and being that which we know we should do and be. Job did wonderfully during his trials because he continued trusting and obeying the Lord according to what he knew of Him. After his faith lesson he discovered something else; he now knew the Lord Himself – Job 42:5. What an awesome difference!
3. How accomplished are you at taking root where you are planted? You cannot grow where you are unless you take root. You already know how you can be a member of a church but not be committed to its life and ministry. The same goes for your job – you can be there for the paycheck, owing the company nothing but your time and effort. After being planted, taking root is necessary for our growth and our best work output. In all our plantings, He plants us and we decide if we are going to take root. [Perhaps at times we plant ourselves.] But we cannot grow unless we take root, meaning get connected with the flow of life in those places. Otherwise, our time is wasted as far as the eternal value of our time and effort in that place is concerned.
4. If your sufficiency is in Christ, if He is the Author and Finisher of your faith, if you are complete in Him, and if you are currently seated with Him in heavenly places, I don’t have anything to offer you except fellowship. Just keep going. You have rejected religion and found your cross. And you are a normal Christian.
5. We Christians may not be like we look at first glance. Some of us may not be like we look at 10th glance. We have our treasure [God’s Spirit] alive in us. At times He does not show very brightly, but He is there. In my experience, a piece broken off of one’s pottery can help others see the Good Stuff within. Example: Afflicted saints of body and/or soul, living whole and healthy lives that radiate Christ despite their disability. They and their defect show the Lord’s wonder. But even without a disability, we can radiate abundantly beyond our natural human goodness.
6. [Don’t lose sight of the Lord in this Thought; it gets pretty grim.] Our society is becoming more decadent by the month. Not many years ago, our society [Christians or not] had a good sense of the mind of Christ, meaning at least how the Lord wanted mankind to live and think. Now, unbelieving or religious people, including high level ones, are beginning to dominate society. As a people, we are becoming spiritually dead. We have always had some who lived in darkness, but now they are becoming a majority among us.

Paul wrote to our fellow believers in Corinth, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him. The natural man cannot understand them because they are spiritually discerned only by the Holy Spirit within us. So, the spiritual person is equipped to judge all things, while the natural person cannot understand him. The natural person just cannot understand the spiritual person. No one knows God’s whole mind, but we believers have the mind of Christ which is the Spirit alive and free within biblically informed and yielded humans” – 1 Cor. 2:12-16, notice my modern editing.

Closely related to our current darkness, two things in modern western Christianity are remarkable: 1) the astonishing rate at which Christian culture is shrinking and 2) open sensuality and drug use. Those two problems show remarkably in the blindness and fumbling actions of those we call “leaders,” and leaders they are. The simplest solutions are beyond them. Cooperation is non-existent, and childish behavior and greed lead the way. Full commitment to social experimentation is confusing the remaining traditionalists. Doing good or bad is as you personally define them. It’s as though “well-meaning” thought will improve our problems.

The simple and logical clarity of biblical thought is quickly fading, first in the public arena, then in the private and church arenas. And it has happened so quickly – during one lifetime. Belief and faith in the Lord have rapidly diminished so that the one thing that could maintain our reasoning capacity has been cut off from schools, news media, and social media. That leaves humanity with our sin nature, and it is now on the front burner. Mankind is defective, blind and unable to access the Spirit of God. Scripture gives us good pictures of what happens to society in our case – we are increasingly debauched until we reach the point of unreasoning brutishness.

You have asked yourself the question [I trust]: Have we reached the point of no return? Will we see the gospel shine once again, or are we at the point of going over the precipice? Is this God’s time to bring things as we have known them to a close? Such may be, but not to worry. Work and pray. The One who knows the answer, Who is the answer, Who has all in His hands, is offering us the mind of Christ – 1 Cor. 2:16. Christ’s mind was a human mind [exactly like yours and mine], alive in faith and submitted to God without reservation [exactly like we are offered and are growing into]. To believers, the mind of Christ is the corporate mind of saints submitted to one another before the Lord. There He grants us His mind. Gather together, ask and receive. Out of our comfortable unity [a definition of Love] comes the revelation and accomplishment of His will.