THOUGHTS OF JANUARY, 2017

1. The Lord wants us to give to those who ask and, I will add, “until it does not hurt,” meaning we are to give cheerfully. You already know that if we leave the “doctrine of giving” at the point of saying only that, we will be out of balance. The balance is provided by, “Don’t feed those who will not work” [just a bit edited – ed.]. Individuals and nations swing left and right trying to establish a balance in giving in its varied forms. The balance has to do with knowledge, available funds, wisdom, guilt, and love. Aside from incidental-type gifts, when you give people something for nothing, they are robbed of their dignity and self-worth. When people use the fruit of their labors to buy something, their dignity increases. That’s the basis for “socialism weakens; capitalism strengthens.”

I have swung to the left and to the right about giving. My answer lies in a generous heart, wisely viewing the situation, and listening to the Lord. I have given when I knew it was going to be misused, and have withheld when it was truly needed. If it was a personal contact, I needed to examine my attitude, my resources, the other’s needs, and the witness of the Holy Spirit who knew all of the additional factors. In one case I had every reason to believe that the money was going to be used to purchase more illegal drugs. It wasn’t, but only because the Holy Spirit convicted the addict as he left me with the money and was on his way to purchase more drugs. That spiritual conviction changed the druggie’s life. We know so little but need to make do with what we have, including the Holy Spirit’s full-time availability.

1. Murder, under the labels of “right to die,” “physician-assisted suicide,” and “euthanasia,” is practiced in various American states and in other nations. Don’t confuse that with “Right to Try” laws that are being passed in many states. “Right to Try” laws allow physicians to treat terminally ill patients with as-yet-unproven procedures or drugs, in hopes that something can be done to help the patient with an unproven drug that may be approved later, but later would be too late to help the current patient.
2. We know that when we resist the devil he flees from us, right? So, how do you find yourself resisting him? Are you fighting him, shouting at him, or pleading with the Lord to help you defeat him? Those are actions that indicate the victory has yet to be won. Standing is the victor’s position. Victors have ceased fighting because the devil is defeated in this problem, in that problem, in the coming problem, etc. Thus, we resist him by standing in Jesus’ victory over the devil. Even though he continues roaring like a lion [which is meant to frighten and scatter us] we have the victory. No matter the circumstances, whether we stay sick, go bankrupt, or die, we are victors. Jesus stood as a victor should stand, although He was nailed to a cross, was about to die, and did die. That is our stance, also. Stand.
3. So why do the righteous victors yet suffer? Job was a righteous victor, so why did he suffer? Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and many other righteous victors in and out of Scripture suffered greatly. Suffering in body and soul are designed to show us and others that standing is the Lord’s position for those who know the victory is won. Read Hebrews chapter 11 to the end. Those who had already triumphed in faith still suffered. They had on their spiritual armor, which allowed them to stand amid the clamor and threats of their and the Lord’s enemy. Theirs was not the battle. The Lord was already victorious and they stood in that victory. That is the stance of those who have accepted the Lord’s offer of the way of the cross. We have nothing to lose by standing.
4. I have been observing something that is coming about in my soul. When I don’t know something, or when I see two supposedly opposing teachings in Scripture, my confidence grows. That which I do not know points to a lack or weakness, but my Resource [the Lord] knows it all. I don’t have to have absolutes or total comprehensions. It is good to be finite alongside the Infinite One.

As a matter of fact, now when I begin to “totally understand” something I am reminded that I do not totally understand, but am still on the road to understanding. To totally understand is reserved for the Lord, and is a burden to us when we think we have it, as thought the Pharisees. I’ll settle for adequate understanding and look for more to come. That has to do with medical care, engineering, home making, farming, etc. It’s the way of science and faith.

1. I meet people who think they are going nowhere. Some are still trying to get somewhere, some are content with where they are, and some are convinced they are never going anywhere. On the other hand, those who know Jesus Christ tend to be forward-looking. We have confidence in the Lord’s ability to move us forward, even when we are earthly washouts or advanced in age. [There is a vast difference between those two.] We have perspective, and much more than perspective. We have eternity ahead and know that everything we do or think has eternal effects.

Part of our perspective is that terrible things are ahead for the world, some of which will occur while we are still here. We are in what some call “uncertain times.” Don’t be thrown off by that term because we know these times, but by another term -- “exciting times.” Uncertainty is not unsettling to us because our confidence is in the One who has all in His hands. We have the mind of Christ, which is a human mind alive to God by His Spirit, so we have an entirely different and usually accurate perspective of past, current, and coming events.

However, it is important to know that “terrible things are ahead for the world, some of which will occur while we are still here.” That’s where we are now. We are in those uncertain/exciting times, during which things will certainly happen that we already know will occur. Then the Lord Jesus will return to rule this world.

Some of those terrible things are deceits. Have you noticed that lying has become widespread, perfected, and even admired? Professional news agencies intentionally lie, producing the news as they want it. People no longer know how to discern the truth from lies because they have no basis in their character for judging truth and lies. Critical thinking skills are unknown or underdeveloped. Decisions are often made on emotions.

Jesus said, “Do not be deceived,” and He said that deception would be a major problem just prior to His return. Those who know the truth will not be deceived. The Bible and the Holy Spirit lead us into being like the Bereans in Acts 17:11. The rapture [be there one, and I think there will be] is coming at a time when we do not know, but we can already see things developing that we are told will happen after the rapture. Once Christians are gone, lies will flood the earth and the truth will be thought evil. But in those evil days the Lord will raise up Israel and there will be a revival in the world.

We have not found ourselves here at this time of creation by accident. This is our time. Our King is coming. Work, keep your peace, love one another without measure. He is at the door. He has lingered but when He comes it will be quickly.

1. If you are interested in the question: “Is there a difference between being a Christian by intellectual acceptance of the gospel, and being a Christian by spirit-given revelation of the gospel,” recall that Jesus would not explain His good news to many who would have liked Him to, but only to those who He recognized were responsive spiritually – Luke 8:10. He did not want them to have the level of faith that comes only by human seeing or hearing the truth, and agreeing with it. The kingdom is spiritual.

When He used those quaint little stories [parables] to explain eternal, central truths He was deliberately protecting the multitudes’ minds from an intellectual acceptance of His very good news of salvation. Prepared hearts were needed, not only prepared minds. Every heartfelt relationship, whether earthly or heavenly, is vastly different from a relationship that is based on simply the human intellect. When Jesus [or Paul or Peter] recognized that His Father had gone before Him and prepared a person or an occasion, He knew that His word was going to take root and bear fruit. The others, who would have become seers and doers of His word without changed hearts, would hopefully be granted God’s grace later. In fact, Jesus would get His disciples aside from the masses before He would provide any needed explanations of His parables to them – Mark 4:33-34.

When we see that truth, our lives and ministries are changed. We are able to “shake off the dust” from our feet and move on down the road, looking for ripe fruit [God’s active handiwork] instead of green fruit. Or, we are able to stay in a place and give our lives to those who we see are destined for Life – Rom. 8:29-30; 9:all; Eph. 1:3-12.

1. Sports coaches tell their teams to stay focused. In a contest, it is easy to get distracted from the basics that make for success. I admire church leaders, especially preachers and worship leaders, who week after week and year after year labor to perfect their and others gifts, to create meetings that have healthy environments – music, sermons, sensitivity and orderliness. In the midst of prolonged, repetitious routines it is easy to lose focus – the cross of Christ and our crosswalk, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. It appears easy to lose focus, to get into empty, beautiful worship, to make people feel better while missing God’s presence among us. The solution is found while adoring Him.
2. His first offer was simply for them to “Follow me” – Matt. 4:19. Following Him was not all that simple or easy because it meant that they had to get up now, get out of their boats now, and go with Him down the road now. That meant leaving their jobs, their families and friends, their reputations, and whatever other God-given gifts and responsibilities they had going for them, on that day, now! And it was simply an offer: “Follow me.” Some did; some didn’t. Some do; some don’t.

Then it began to get serious. Early-on He gathered them together in front of a multitude and told them the impossibilities that were ahead – Matt. 5, 6, 7. Those words, along with the realization that they were becoming radicals [in religion and in politics], caused some to go back. They wanted to be reasonable folks, not fanatics.

Add to those situations that they were going “nowhere!” They had no destination, no home base, no overnight lodgings, and no financial backers. And they were going in circles, occasionally passing through their hometowns, which didn’t turn out good, either. The best places and people were trying to kill them.

As the few years passed He began to tell them what was ahead for them and Him. It was tough stuff, which they handled by refusing to believe Him. [Not an unusual response to the gospel and to the truth in any of its forms.] They knew the wonderful things that He had done and thought he could and would do them again at any time. Their hopes and emotions and personal investments in Him blocked out His bad news. Their grand ideas about the timing of His imminent kingdom caused them to expect the most and best, on their terms and schedule.

So, He became more clear and blunt. They had been attracted to Him for what they could get from Him, just by following Him. Now He told them that following Him was to be based on what they were willing to put into it, that being their lives and souls to the death of self. He told them of His and their crosses, and of Life Eternal through His and their deaths. He would go first, then they were to follow – John 13:36.

His offer still stands. The better and longer we embrace our crosses, the more free we are of our sin-prisons, and our crosses cease being restricting theologies. They become practical, natural, fulfilling LIFE at the center of our weak humanity.

1. If someone asks you to describe your righteousness, don’t fall for their theological trick. Don’t start telling them of the works of God’s grace in your soul, such as the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23. Our righteousness is a man, Christ Himself. He is our righteousness. We have righteousnesses that are the result of the Lord’s handiwork during the process of our sanctification, praise the Lord! But He is our righteousness. That’s basic Christian truth. See Rom. 3:22; 4:6; 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:19; Phil. 3:9; Heb. 11:7, but mostly 2 Cor. 5:21.

We have been made righteous through our faith in Jesus Christ. That’s God’s arrangement. Once we have been born again, it is done. So, when you find yourself hungering and thirsting for righteousness [Matt. 5:6], you are seeking intimacy and fellowship with Jesus the human who has already received His new body, like the one we will soon have.

Through the daily function of that same original faith in Jesus we also are being adorned with multiple righteousnesses.

1. In Revelation 1:9 John identified himself to us as our brother. There was further identification with us, that he partook in the trials and kingdom life and steadfastness that Jesus endured and that we endure. He said that he knew he was right where the Lord placed him. God’s purpose in the situation was for his receiving God’s word and for being a living testimony to that word – Jesus. Saints, let’s settle into the Life that John revealed in that experience. Our places of being shut out, shut in, misunderstood, persecuted, lonely, dry and dark are where we meet the Lord to receive answers to our prayers and His prayers for us. He is there and bids us to join Him, if you can find standing room there among the faithful crowd already present.
2. The Holy Spirit came to them as recorded in Acts 2. Why did the Spirit come? 1) God promised to send the Holy Spirit. The promise is found in the Old Testament and by Jesus in Acts 1. 2) He came according to schedule – on the Day of Pentecost. God has times and places and ways. 3) They were of one accord, of one mind, and praying. As a “what if,” what do you think would have happened if they were elsewhere than He had commanded them to be, were at odds with one another, and were in despair over His departure? 4) They were using available time to do the business at hand – replacing Judas with Matthias.

[A highly speculative, aside question: If they had been in the condition of point 3 above, and the Holy Spirit had not come to them because of their condition, what might now be delaying the Lord’s coming to us? That’s not a very good question theologically, is it!]

1. Last month’s Thought No. 11 was that if you have no debt and have $10. in your pocket, you are wealthier than 25% of Americans. Add to that: 60% of Americans do not have $500. in savings, 69% do not have $1,000. and 35% have no savings at all.

There is a lot to say about that kind of information. We could point to those who do not work and save, and to those who cannot work and save. We could point to a society that does not contribute to healthy life-practices. We could point to sections of us who do not love God or one another [business, labor, elites, politics, race] enough to do something about it personally.

But we can point more accurately if we know where God’s power resides; the power to change people and cultures and politics. It is promised to and does reside to variable extent in the church. Like Jesus did not come to end poverty, neither did He promise the church that we would end poverty, but that He would empower us to glorify Him as we love the poor [and the rich]. Opportunities abound to help the needy, among whom may be more of those called to be part of God’s family.

1. The Old Testament represented the coming Messiah as having sort of a dual personality and assignment, meaning as both a Lion and a Lamb. On God’s schedule came Jesus of Nazareth, revealed at His age 30 as that Lion and Lamb. Although He was recognized by the evil spiritual powers as the Lion, and was desired by His followers to function as the Lion, His assignment on that trip was to function mostly as the Lamb. But He was then and still is fully both.

John knew Him best. He was given the task of writing the gospel of God’s love in Jesus, about the Lamb. He did a good job of that, as inspired by the Holy Spirit. There came a time when John saw Jesus in His full glory, not at all like John had known Him in His predominant human presentation as Jesus the Lamb of God – Rev. 1:12-16. John did not recognize his friend, rabbi and savior. Can it be that some of the Lamb’s flock still do not recognize Him or His hand in their lives as He comes to us now as the Lion? We don’t have to await His return in order to get a taste of His fullness as Lamb and Lion. Much of that which we attribute to the enemy actually comes to us as perfectly customized love for our eternal benefit by the Lion. We are given the Gospel of Job for much of that revelation.

1. Now, to prove that I am not seminary educated, I will share some thoughts on justification. Justification declares the repentant sinner to be as clean and pure as if he had never sinned. That’s more than our being forgiven, because being forgiven leaves us with both the factual knowledge and residual negative senses of our having sinned. Justification does not say that the sinner had never sinned. The justified person is declared completely and forever innocent of forgiven sin and sins, as if he had never been a sinner and never committed a sin.

But there must be justice; the offending one’s debt must be paid! If a wrong-doing occurred, someone must be punished on balance, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” That requires an absolute, totally just, all-knowing Judge who applies an appropriate punishment for the offence. Our Judge supplied the One who has taken the punishment for our sin and sins. Our faith in Jesus Christ, that Substitute, satisfies our Judge.

The sinner is not only forgiven of the sinful performance and its penalty, but is declared as clean as if he had never sinned -- “just-if-I’d” never sinned. As a result, the justified sinner has a totally clear conscience and pure heart. He lives with no known sin or sin-effect as he stays current through repentance, which may include restitution. He is utterly clean in every aspect.

We acknowledge the fact of our past and future sins, but only as fact – they have left no mark on our souls and we do as much as is possible to help those whom we have wounded come to that same “no residual mark” from our sins. Our attitude about ourselves is as if we have never sinned and as if we will never sin.

Justification allows for the factual acknowledgement of our imperfection [of intellectual, character, talent, etc.] in self and in others, and for helpful corrective measures.

Also, we live with no striving to be good. We live by faith in Jesus, which at times requires deep and laborious groanings in our souls. There is no focus on pleasing God by being good in order to avoid evil [that’s eating from the wrong tree], but we focus on that which our heavenly Father wants us to do and His grace to obey [that’s eating from the right tree].

We live/walk in the Spirit. Therefore, “We are the righteousness of God in Christ” – 2 Corinthians 5:21. God Himself declares that to be true about us. We are to accept that for ourselves, and apply it to our fellow believers.

This is not sinless perfection – Romans 7:21-25; 1 John 1:5-10 -- but is the height of sinner perfection as it is offered in this life. We are His handiwork. Justification is a taste of the glory which is ahead for us after we leave the body of this death.

Question: Who do you think has the biggest problem with a sinner having been justified? 1) God? 2) The justified sinner? 3) Other believers? 4) Unbelievers of the world? My answer: 1) Not God, because justification is His will for us. 2) The justified sinner; yes, because it is such a relief to be forgiven that we are often content to be ignorant of our justification. 3) Other believers; yes, because they are often unaware of the requirement and joys and power of justified saints accepting others’ justification. Unified justified saints are a powerful force. 4) Unbelievers of the world: Yes and no, because the worldly mindset doesn’t understand the things of God. Yet, the world’s unbelievers have something of quality working within them that, because of their own heavy load of guilt, they are often reluctant to adversely judge others.

1. The Lord furnishes us with norms, standards, and gold standards. It is my observation, starting with myself, that we, the church, have not been exposed to those standards and therefore are not in an adequate situation to be able to clearly accept or reject them. When higher standards are eventually clarified for us, then at last we have the “opportunity” to start our bobbing and weaving, spinning, and other forms of defense as is thrown up by our flesh.

Examples: 1) “Love the Lord with all that we are and have.” We have settled for a “reasonableness” of love for Him that does not label us as fanatics, and certainly does not impoverish us financially (\*). We will have none of that stuff as taught by Jesus, Paul, and the others who must have been “special cases.” 2) “Love our neighbor as ourselves?” (\*). Lord, surely you didn’t mean as ourselves! If you meant something close to that, I hope that you are satisfied with how I love my neighbor. 3) “Come, follow me; I have no home.” Having a home, apartment, etc. is not the standard. Having no place to call home is the standard. Having a home is a gift of God and is a calling – to be possessed when and where and how and if he calls us to a home-necessary ministry (\*). And it is His property – really His property! 4) Having a job is not the norm (\*). 5) Having and staying with husband, wife, children, etc. is also not the norm, but not having or staying with them is the norm [\*]. Simply look at Jesus’ and Paul’s lives and teachings for the norm, the gold standard. Now for the [\*s].

Jesus taught us the way. He was and is the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Light. He never did teach less than His own standard which, if we hear His offer and get up, get out of the boat, and start walking with Him will lead us in the direction of that gold standard. If we don’t hear the gold standard we certainly will not come to the end of ourselves where we can call out to Him for help. Everything He did and said was perfect and that’s what He offers to us. They were and we are called to walk with Him. When we do that, we may have spouses, children, homes, jobs, etc., but we will know them to be gifts of God and how they fit into His plan for our lives. Then we will not be working to fit Him and His plans into our family life, job, and social involvements.

Jesus gave us His standards. I see the epistles as instructions for those who are with Him on the road, how to handle the curves and bumps and dead ends. We will not get past those tests if we think they are there only for us to measure up to.

1. The Lord has set us up for Life in His kingdom. It is not a kingdom of righteousness through being good; it is a kingdom of righteousness through faith, even if we are not being good. That is one of the strain-points between religiosity and true religion. Religiosity, even Christian religiosity, tries to make us better, to reform us. True religion seeks to crucify us through our yielding to the Holy Spirit as He diligently customizes every detail of our walk and calls us to take up our cross and follow Jesus on that walk.

Religiosity fails to bring about God’s desired result; the cross never fails. Religiosity tries to develop morality, good works, a form of spirituality, and tries to bring us to personal fulfillment [which is the opposite of death to self]; but the religion of the cross, with its wounds, scars and evidence of death, shows resurrection life.

Resurrection life cannot be faked. Faked resurrection was claimed about Jesus 2,000 years ago, and some then and now believe the claim. Those who know what resurrection life is realize that death on a cross is public and full of shame; only Christ’s love of us and ours for Him can accomplish it. It is designed to attract only those who are destined for glory.

“Morality can keep you out of jail but only the blood of Jesus Christ can keep you out of hell” – Charles Spurgeon.

1. “If the guilt of sin is so great that nothing can satisfy it but the blood of Jesus; and the filth of sin is so great that nothing can fetch out the stain thereof but the blood of Jesus; how great, how heinous, how sinful must the evil of sin be.” – Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges [1861-1915], Scottish-born Australian Army officer.
2. Use what you have: Lesson number one: At the age of 80, Moses was one of the biggest losers in Scripture. From his youth he had known that he had been born to lead God’s people, Israel, out of slavery in Egypt. He had been raised up as Pharaoh’s son for 40 years, was possibly to be the next Pharaoh, but committed murder and fled for his life. His next 40 years were spent in hiding, herding sheep on the far side of the dessert wilderness, which was a job he had been raised to despise. He was a washout.

When the Lord came to him and said he was now going to be used to free the slaves, he said he was only a country hick who could not do such a big job, that no one would believe that God had talked to him, and that he was now so un-eloquent of speech that he could no longer even hold a good conversation in Egyptian. As if that was not bad enough, the Lord showed him that one of the few things he owned, that he depended on in his work and for personal safety, his staff, was worthless to Moses, also. The Lord told him to throw it down, and it turned into a snake. Then he was told to pick up the snake, which immediately turned again into Moses’ staff – except now and thereafter Moses did not call it “my staff,” but “God’s staff.” He had been stripped of the last thing that was “his.”

Now all that Moses had was God and God’s staff. The dropout, runaway, washout was now God-ready. Moses used God’s staff to do a string of miracles in Egypt, which led to Israel being freed from slavery – but not yet. While he and the several million Israelites were leaving Egypt, they were trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army, which was coming after them. Pharaoh had changed his mind about releasing them. Moses began praying to the Lord, asking Him for help. The Lord told him to stop praying and use what he had – God’s rod. Moses did, and you know the rest. They were off into the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. The lesson at that point had been, “Use what you have.” All that Moses had been and been through was God’s handiwork, and Moses had not known it – Eph. 2:8-10. All that had been bad had been turned to good because He now loved and trusted God and was yielded to Him – Rom. 8:28.

1. Use what you have: Lesson number two. Nehemiah stood atop the heap of rubble. Jerusalem had been destroyed and completely torn down. The heap of stones was of the temple, the city’s houses, and the city walls. It had been destroyed approximately 60 years previously and the people killed or carried off into slavery in Babylon. Now, here he was, with a small percent of the people, back in Israel, free, and determined to rebuild.

What did he do? He stood there on the rubble, gathered the people, and took responsibility for the terrible condition they were in. They did not blame their mess on their parents and grandparents, although they included the guilt of those forefathers in their prayers as being as guilty as themselves. But Nehemiah said, “We are responsible for this. We turned from God and His ways and He chastised us – Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6. They turned the rubble of their sinful lives into good material for their future – Rom. 8:28 again. They were God’s handiwork because they repented, loved Him, and were yielded to Him for His purposes. They used what they had, which was the mess of their past lives. They were God’s people and that material was His provision.

1. Use what you have: Lesson number three. The faithful widow and her two sons were in a tight place. They had hocked everything they had and they were still over their heads in debt. Their creditors were coming for the boys. The two were going to become slaves. The prophet Elisha said to her, “Let’s think big, here. Take stock of what little you might have.” She had only a jar of olive oil. Elisha told her to borrow as many empty jugs as her neighbors had, and go in the house with her sons and close the doors behind them.

This was going to be a family affair – God, the widow, and the sons. She did as Elisha said. She started pouring oil from her little jar into the larger jugs. She poured and she poured. She poured until all of the large jugs were full, then the oil stopped flowing from her little jug. That was enough oil to pay off her debts and for the family to live on. That which had been a little nothing was totally adequate for their needs, when in faith they had obeyed God’s word. They used what they had and it was enough.

What are we talking about? People who commit themselves and whatever they have to the Lord, to love one another, to serve the Lord in His purposes – that’s what He wants so He can build His church. Each of us is perfectly prepared by our Manufacturer and Redeemer to be perfectly fit for the job/place He has for us. Our contribution is to give ourselves to Him. That’s why we are all so very different. He needs all sorts of material on every project, not all the same sort. Exactly like He tells us to use what we have, He uses what He has. That’s us.

1. Jesus told us that we were to know the season of His return, but not the day or hour, and He gave us an abundance of seasonal evidences. As far as I am concerned, the hour or the day are of no use to me, but knowing the season is of great use. Jesus and our Father agreed with that. He told us that we should know the season of His return because it is a time to be on the alert. That was Jesus’ opinion, so He gave us those seasonal evidences. One evidence is that the fig tree would have leaves on it. In Scripture, Israel is the fig tree and it seems that the fig tree now has leaves. It has no fruit, but fruit will come only when they recognize their Messiah.

I have been thinking of the evidences that really impress me. One is that apparently the generation that saw the return of Israel to national status would not die out before He returns. Israel became a nation on May 14, 1948. I was 18 years old at that time and now am almost 87. The generation that was alive in 1948 is dying off but will not die off until He returns.

What to do?! If we explain away the evidences, we will be right all but one time. If we enhance the evidences in order to make them our-timely, we will be wrong all but one time. The solution: Sell out all that you are and have to the Lord, [we should be doing that already, because that’s His first and greatest commandment] but don’t quit your day job.

1. A word about the apostasy that occurs prior to Jesus’ return, as mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 (1-17) and Jude 17-25. Apostasy means more than a falling away from faith in Jesus or having bad religious doctrines. It means a departure from the condition of normal, a departure from a state of conformity to established truth, from things firmly established and recognized.

Examples of apostasy: 1) Rejection of true faith. Unbelief in Jesus as the Messiah, or in His written Word. Unbelief in miracles in Jesus’ days and since and now. 2) Departure from the normal male and female condition. Homosexuality is called normal. Women seem to want to be more like men than like women; that which is considered manly is being femininized. Both sexes are losing their distinctiveness. 3) Departure from marriage and its functions and permanency. The 50% divorce rate in and out of the church shows loss of respect for the marriage covenant. Husbands are not loving their wives and wives are not obeying their husbands. 4) Departure from normal care of and life of children. Fathers are leaving their children. Children are being abused sexually and emotionally. 5) Departure from normal humanity and human relationships. It does not take the holocaust to show the loss of normal humanity. Angry and destructive protests, cheating in business, impolite automobile driving habits, and insubordinate attitudes abound. Movie and television programs are degenerate.

All these are apostasies, a departure from God’s ways as He established them in the order of His creation. He is the Way. His Way is the normal. Believers are a people in whom He has established His Way and we have accepted His Way as being our normal.

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