THOUGHTS OF APRIL, 2012

1. Jesus did not come to make bad people good; He came to make dead people live. We often have our prayerful attention called to someone who is badly behaving. That’s the Lord’s attention-getter so the faithful will pray that the Lord give life to that person – 1 John 5:16.

2. It is good to be reminded of/caught by that which one has said previously. We all need a dose of humble pie at least from time to time. The alternative to being humbled [when caught in our own words] is to spin one’s own previous words to manufacture an exception for yourself. That is terrible, and I have tried to do it – perhaps even done it. At other times, I have seen a true exception but it was so close to an alibi or a spin that I didn’t dare use it. Better to accept an undeserved, simple correction than to appear to the younger present to be wiggling out of a self-set trap. That’s a sweet occasion for the Lord to display a leader’s/parent’s humility.

3. Among King Saul’s last recorded words were those of regrets, spoken to David as found in 1 Samuel 26:21: “Behold, I have played the fool and have committed a serious error.” He had tried to kill David, but was himself killed [in battle] “before his time.” He chose the way of death and reaped its harvest.

On the other hand, David’s last song [2 Sam. 23] is loaded with glorious non-regrets. David had forgiven Saul for his personal and national sins, which probably means that he had forgiven himself for his own sins [no self-condemnation or lingering shame]. David forgave, and lived. He chose the way of life and reaped its harvest.

Jesus, a very forgiving person, is in the lineage of David. So are we, and our actions show it. Right?

4. Is your prayer list, whether written or unwritten, simply a list of those whom you earnestly support before the Lord? Suggestion: Perhaps those persons and things that you consistently have on your heart and in your thoughts are designed and planned by the Lord to be a picture of that which He is doing in your life, or putting into your intercessory hands. The content of your prayers may be most revealing and expressive of His burden to and through you. See if there is a design to your burdens, with some progression, in your more heartfelt prayers.

5. The Lord is so great [loving, powerful, extensive and pervasive] that we can be peaceful in all situations. Yet, he can become so great to our finite minds that He seems impersonal. A picture of that was given me by a blessed rabbi who said: “Who am I that He would be personally concerned with me?!” A personal relationship with the Lord is necessary, but even believers can drift into what they think is an impersonal alliance of various deceptive sorts.

Ernest Moslems and Jews are God-seekers, as are many Christians, not knowing that we have a living God who instead is seeking us. Yes, we are to seek Him, daily and continually, but if we do not know that He is seeking us we greatly reduce our chance of finding Him. As with all else, our searchings must be in faith – not in our ability to find Him, but in knowing that He has invited us to successfully seek Him and that He will reveal Himself.

6. If you are part of a responsibility group, take your kingdom position by storm. Face down the enemy, disallow His actions, and clearly permit the good – thereby coming into agreement with the Lord. He is awaiting our definitive actions. We are to allow and disallow, permit and deny, open and shut. If we are ready to be properly yoked spiritually and naturally [the yoke Jesus mentioned in Matthew 11:28-30], and are not slowly measuring out our faithful obedience to Him, He will show His presence in our responsibility group.

NOTE: That yoke makes our naturalness and spirituality balanced and fruitful, not only easy and light. It produces the rest of Hebrews 3 & 4. We find ourselves becoming gentle and humble, with nothing of ourselves to prove to or produce for the world, the church or the Lord of the church. Those weary ones who accept that yoke [which is all ours, not half ours and half Jesus’] lose their heavy burdens of service to the King.

7. Truth stands alone, not needing other help but commonly drawing various forms of humanity and graces to itself. One such grace is an internal rest, which usually shows as peace.

8. There are 3 degrees of temporal well-being [earthly prosperity, not spiritual or soul] in Scripture: poverty, prosperity and riches. Scripture is consistent about a certain line of teaching and reasoning on each. Briefly:

Poverty is bad. It should happen to no one. Generous souls are charitable toward those impoverished. Scripture defines poverty as the condition in which we do not have enough to meet our daily needs – those of today. Poor character and bad habits are listed as common causes of one’s poverty, but poverty is not automatically equated with unrighteousness. See Prov. 13:18; 20:13; 23:20-21; 30:5-9; 2 Cor. 8:9. Voluntary poverty is an immediate and eternal blessing when it is God’s calling and we do it faithfully with love – Rom. 14:23; 1 Cor. 13:3. Home and foreign missionaries, and many others, know the blessing of that calling. Living with and on the level of those whom we serve is ordinarily a part of our calling.

Prosperity is great. The Lord works to prosper us, mostly through our good character and habits. We should pray for prosperity of both temporal and spiritual types. Those in prosperity have enough for their daily needs. Jesus is our example again. He had no home, but his daily needs were met. This is one of Jesus’ examples that our self/soul commonly rejects. Disciples are told to pray for their daily bread. Both Testaments speak well of prosperity. See Ps. 118:25; 122:6; Matt. 6:11; 13:22.

Riches are commonly spoken of in negative ways throughout Scripture, mainly as being a danger or a snare. It is defined [in its finest definition] as having more than one needs for today. Those who have tomorrow’s goods, and see that a brother does not have today’s needs met, is labeled “unrighteous.” Riches do not indicate unrighteousness or righteousness. The Holy Spirit will enrich some and instruct them to amass great wealth. That is one of the methods He uses to prepare large gifts to His works. Jesus was blessed and provided for by rich friends, such as Lazarus.

Nancy and I have been poor, prosperous and rich many times, both [involuntarily] before we began our walk with the Lord and [voluntarily] since we began. He has provided for us to live according to whichever ministry He called us to. There is more to say about all of this, but try not to miss my central Thought.

9. For centuries, physicians swore to the Hippocratic Oath. It committed them to a moral standard that was above that of their local and changeable cultures. Modernized versions of the Oath are both improvements and degenerations. It’s good that the “covenant with the gods” is removed [Hippocrates was a polytheist], but taken out are prohibitions on euthanasia, performing abortions, physician conduct with regard to sexual relationships with patients, and personal accountability for one’s judgments and actions. Chances are that your middle aged and younger physician has not sworn to the standards of the non-Christian Hippocrates.

The modern oaths, besides omitting the above, have added affirmative political and social duties, such as participating in community improvements, betterment of public health, and the support of access to medical care for all people. With that seemingly good shift, it is easy to miss noting that physicians are now focusing on treating society and social groups, not individuals. The idea is that dollars must be saved to do the most good, and that certain groups should get more and better care while other groups should get less and inferior care. I guarantee you that no one will say it that way. When you go to your doctor, remember that society is being treated, and you [as a member of your group] must fit into it according to society’s greater needs.

Not to worry. This life is a beginning for much more and better things. Trust and obedience will put you in the Winner’s inner circle.

10. Here is a Thought for your consideration. In His own wilderness experience [Luke 4], the Lord was tested three times according to His being the Son of God. He was tested in and according to His divinity. Then the devil left Him until a more opportune time, which seemed to occur in the Garden before His arrest and onward until His death on the cross. During those hours He appeared to be tempted in His humanity, and He referred to Himself to Judas as the Son of Man. The following trials were endured in His manhood. The protections of Luke 4 had to no longer apply.

Of course, He was still who He was, but He laid down everything of His divinity that came with him and endured as a man [as a sinful man]. The shame and challenges that occurred during those hours were temptations to come out of His humanity and exercise the promises of His sonship. He did not.

11. Does all of our memory, or only part of it, come from within our brain, or does some or all of our memory come from outside of ourselves when we begin the retrieval process? Is everything we remember brought out from our brain’s store of facts, or is there a heavenly memory bank that is opened to us? Is the ingenious mind fed from above? Do our brains work as do our limited memory computers, by being hooked up to an unlimited information heavenly data bank? Is the process like prayer and intercession, that we get aligned with the Lord and things begin to happen according to the will of God? When Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would enrich our memories, did He mean according to the limitation of our mind’s stored memory or are we offered an information contact, which all preachers and teachers know functions as “revelation” while they are ministering?

All questions and no answers. I’ll get the answers from you.

12. This might be a prolonged Thought. That’s a warning to our Attention Deficit saints. >[:=) The topic is on integration and non-integration of the bride of Christ. Her body is made whole and is coordinated by her living out the practicalities of love, which emanate from the Lord’s love for us. He wants us [that’s us, corporately] to be complete. Simply put, no one person or congregation or denomination can be as complete as the Lord desires and offers us unless we are united with and functioning with the whole body of Christ. That will be the central thought of this Thought. Some points:

1) What does it mean to be complete? It means; a) No missing parts. No one withholding himself from full life in the body, a lifestyle referred to as “spiritual gypsy-ism.” We who do that often have lots of life, give doses of our lives here and there, but never become engrafted into a congregation. Instead of “Jesus and us” it is “Jesus and me.” It’s desert island living in a metropolis. b) No self-amputations once engrafted. No splitting, no withdrawal due to hurt feelings or other disappointments. We should love one another as church, as the Lord loves the church. No one should amputate his own self. c) No withered parts. Withering occurs due to non-use. Non-use or non-involvement causes atrophy, perhaps due to an old injury that has left a disability of the soul. Disability can be self-imposed and self-serving. In short, being complete means nothing lacking and all are functioning.

2) Lacking nothing! Imagine that -- the church lacking nothing. After having been handpicked out of the world by the Lord for membership in His family [Eph. 2:8-10], and told that the Holy Spirit positions us in the body according to His will [1 Cor. 12:18], there should be no need for the church to lack members or relationships [ministry will be discussed later]. Thus, we are placed in harness by the Master, with freedom to break harness and split, and to even move in and out of the harness at our will. That’s called iniquity. In Matthew 7:21-23 we get a picture of what happens to anointed believers [and it’s not being sent to hell] who have indeed ministered by the Spirit but were ungoverned by the Master. They were told that they were never intimately harnessed by the Lord in the church. They were listed among the lawless ones [workers of iniquity].

3) Built up, meaning made strong. The Lord is our Personal Coach in the gymnasium called “daily life.” We don’t need to go elsewhere to find our daily life, we are now in it. Our every minute and incident is customized to each one of our needs for being built up personally and corporately. The faith-walk holds us in place as our muscles are strengthened. Remember; no pain, no gain.

4) Being His bride, we are never ignored, abandoned or unadorned; meaning we are not left to adorn ourselves. He lavishes His best and most expensive gifts upon us. This will not be an in-depth teaching on those gifts, so if you need teachings on them, study the Bible and some other good books. We will cover 3 groupings of the Groom’s adornments which He lavishes upon His bride.

a) The five-fold ministers of the word of God – Eph. 4:11. Briefly stated, every congregation has at least one of those ministers. He is called the “pastor.” He may not be a pastor, but he is the pastor. Commonly, he may actually be an evangelist or a teacher; not a pastor. If he actually is a pastor, he will have difficulty bringing people to the Lord and into an alive life and ministry in the Spirit. He will be able to form a warm family of them because that is the result of the presence and ministry of a pastor. But although he may be a pastor and his anointing draws together those present, the congregation lacks the ministry of an evangelist [who creates live faith among believers and unbelievers]. The absence of the ministry of the other three ministries shows as their specific deficiencies. If the supposed pastor is actually an evangelist trying to function as a pastor, he will bring people to faith in Jesus, continually stir them to ministry, and lose them out the back door almost as fast as they come in the front door. If the pastor is instead a teacher, the congregation will be taught ad infinitum, be well-informed, but tend to become a group of Pharisees. In short, no matter who we call a pastor, other classes of ministers are not pastors and cannot pastor/shepherd a flock the way a pastor can. Likewise, a pastor can only be a pastor and can only produce the good fruit of a pastor. His proof is in his pudding – Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:35.

b) The gifts of the Spirit, the charismata, are tools for every Christian’s everyday life. They are given to the body, including the local body, for routine function on the job, in congregational life, and in congregational gatherings. They are given to the body and/but reside for use and their perfection in the souls of individuals. However, they do not belong to the individual, but to the body of Christ. My gift is not “my” gift and I have no right to withhold it from the body, or to be prideful because it puts me in a position of prominence.

c) The fruit of the Spirit, as partially listed in Galatians 5:22-23, are the most precious gifts to the Lord’s bride. If we are to receive them, we must be serious about Him and be proven trustworthy over many seasons of drought and bounty. If you see anyone wearing some of these jewels, and they remain with them consistently, you can be assured that they are in advance preparation for the wedding.

5) There are many more things to be said about integration or disintegration of the body of Christ, and I will list several of them. They have to do with manifesting His glory through:

a) Our personal responses to Him, our Lover, who has already given Himself to us and desires the free-will gift of ourselves to Him, called discipleship. There is a group of men who meet regularly for the purpose of spiritual growth and mutual encouragement. After months of occasional expressions of a desire for discipleship, they decided to select one thing Jesus required of His disciples 2,000 years ago, and to do that thing daily until their next meeting when they would all share their daily disciples’ obedience to that command of the Lord. Only 2 of them came to the next meeting, and in future meetings the matter was not re-visited. The Lord wants a bride who loves Him as He loves us. How can we side-step responding personally to His direct commands?

b) Our personal experiences in the Spirit. Our lives as disciples should be vastly different from the lives of citizens of the world, and from the lives of many of our sibling citizens of God’s kingdom. We should have current or recent testimony of “worldly unnaturalness” on any topic.

c) Persecutions and martyrdoms, all of which are God-controlled and for many of which we must volunteer. Screaming and begging for mercy as we are dragged to our crosses does us and the Lord no good. That manifests no godliness or glory. Those who are crucifying us will not change and join us on their crosses if we live that behavior. Embracing and bearing our crosses brings forth admiration and love from those driving the nails. Those who hated us will notice, admire and love us. Perhaps the Lord has chosen them for salvation and will use our faithful obedience under fire to manifest His workmanship. Testimony: The Lord sent us among those who hated my main tradition of Christianity [Protestant] and who had been acting out their hatred toward Protestants. Within a few weeks they saw us as answers to their prayers, invited us to live among them, and told the populace to be like us.

d) Spiritual maturity, which I will define here as having God’s insight into events, and the ability to resist pressure. A mature saint swears to his own hurt – Ps. 15:4. He treats honorably those unimportant ones whom he does not need and will never see again in this life. He keeps his word, including being on time because, like the Lord, He is a man of his word. He is in control of his life and its circumstances, including when sudden or tragic events occur. When the wind blows, he stands.

e) Indivisible, functional unity with all saints and sinners, as much as God’s grace working within others permits. Strangers and friends alike recognize that there is something working in him, and call it by good names. It’s brotherliness, probably mixed well with hospitality.

f) Our trust in Him as shown by our trust in one another. We can imagine all sorts of things when we do not have something of them in the natural to correct us, meaning that we can imagine a better functional relationship with the Lord than we actually have. To help us with that problem, the Lord gives us report cards, called “people.” We can see how were are doing with Him by seeing how we are doing with people. After all, how can we say we love God whom we have not seen, when we are not loving people whom we do see? If we are a trusting people, we will trust many untrustworthy people and will experience temporal loss in some cases. The payoff is that when the untrustworthy are trusted, many become trustworthy. When we love the unlovable, they become lovable. When we go the way of the Lord, the same things happen to and through us that happened to and through Him. Is that o.k. with you?

g) Having no remarkable individual weakness compared to our other character traits. We are disintegrated if we are great in all ways except one or two. Likewise, we are disintegrated if we are terrible in all ways except one or two. We can’t be trusted when we have a “flakey” character. It may be occasional anger flares, or chronic tardiness, or occasional light swearing, or laziness, or etc. All of our other characteristics may be above reproach, but one outstanding fault can sink us and others in Christ’s body. An integrated person or group is balanced; not perfect, but balanced.

h) Keeping rank and order with others in our lives, in or out of the church. That includes submitting to and honoring those over us at work. It includes submitting to and honoring those over us in the church. It includes submitting to and honoring those who honor the Lord, no matter their social, religious, etc. status. In the reverse, it also means taking responsibility over, not only being responsible under.

i) Controlling our tongue -- its content and extent. That means speaking up when we should, no matter our embarrassment, not speaking when we have nothing appropriate to say, holding our peace if enough has been said by others, and stopping when we have said what we have to say. So, controlling our tongue has more to it than just not cussing, gossiping or lying.

j) Not jumping in and out of our walk in the Spirit. It is remarkable how quickly we can be in devout prayer or worship or conversation and then be given over to foolishness the next second, and vs. Our changes may be more significant, such as reading our Bible, then watching pornography, or blessing God one minute and cursing the driver who cut us off in traffic the next. Double mindedness prevents growth because we develop a pattern of failure while being repeatedly tested. It is death-dealing to us and others. Compare King Saul, who wobbled in and out of godliness. He was peaceful when in church [David playing music] but then tried to commit murder [when he yielded to jealous thoughts about David]. Saul chose death and won the lottery.

Well, I told you back on page 3 that this might become a long Thought. Bless you for sticking with it.

13. Churches named “Cowboy Church” are increasing in number around Texas. They are usually located along main highways. I don’t know if they exist in other states. They are down-to-earth, culturally local, usually in the countryside, and straight forward, and are having an impact on people who have not been attracted to traditional churches.

The Cowboy Church we occasioned in Athens, Texas had a horse trough on the floor down front which they used for baptisms. People came in jeans and the like and sat on folding chairs. The messages are evangelical an evangelistic. Truckers often just pull over beside the road and go in for a Sunday morning blessing. The “church motto” there is “Love ‘em till they ask why.”

The Lord is stirring souls everywhere.

14. Politics has been given an entirely bad reputation. I don’t think it needs to remain that way, but we seem to accept the unrighteousness of politics as a necessary matter-of-fact. I don’t. It may be the devil’s worst social bastion, but is still part of those gates of hell that the Lord said His church would break down.

I see the rottenness of moral compromise, betrayal, payola, power struggles, etc., but politics does not need to be that way. Those whom the Lord will use to establish righteousness in politics must certainly take their lumps, but the Lord is ready to clean-up politics and re-make its reputation as part of His kingdom.

Pilate was stuck in a political quandary, like modern politicians are, but the unrighteous decision he chose was not necessary. His own logic, observations, and sense of right and wrong were buttressed somewhat by his wife’s dream about that righteous man standing before him, but he was not willing to pay the price associated with doing that which he knew was right and saying why he did it.

Even Satan’s worst, highest and strongest ramparts will be brought down by the church.

15. It’s hard to be non-partisan when a politician says, “The climate is out of control!”

16. As far as our living in the kingdom of this world is concerned, of which we have no choice until we leave here, it is obvious that that old, sly, tongue-in-cheek Chinese curse is upon us: “May you live in interesting times.” The evidence is all about us, at home and abroad. We cannot keep up with all the wars, and the levels of them, such as typical military, financial and religious. The entire global system is being challenged for its own survival, which tells us that global solutions are at hand. That sets the stage for global regimes – precisely what the Bible has predicted [for believers’ benefit and encouragement] for thousands of years.

It seems that pessimists are the most informed in this matter. In fact, the distinction between the optimist and the pessimist is that the pessimist is the one with more information. Even the optimists among us think the future is uncertain.

Isn’t it life-giving to know that the invisible war is the real war, and that the invisible All-Mighty is running things, times and places! The primacy of that war and our great God determines the actual outcome, which eclipses all aspects of those things affecting our lives, families, careers and well-being. If we are not an integrated [human and spirit] being, we should remember that poor spiritual hygiene can inadvertently place us in terrible misery.

This is not a time to lollygag around [to waste time in a pleasant, idle way] spiritually. I, probably among many, know that it is not my position to be comfortable with having plenty while my brother goes without. God is working in His church. The instruction to be “dangerously generous” is at work in my soul.

17. Obviously not to change the subject – some of the Lord’s names, each of which represents the way He reveal s Himself through His behavior toward the world:

1) HaShem represents His compassion. This name also represents the eternity of God, because it is composed of the letters that spell, “He was, He is, and He will be,” meaning He is timeless.

2) Elohim is the name He uses when He exercises strict judgment.

3) Shaddai indicates His mastery over nature and is used when He performs hidden miracles, like He did for the patriarchs.

4) Adonoy is used instead of God’s actual name [Shem HaMeforash], which is too special and sacred to be spoken. It is commonly used in prayers or when reading the Torah, but HaShem is usually used in common speech.

5) Jehovah Rohim reveals the shepherd nature and function of the Lord, as in Psalm 23.

18. It is good to establish sound, tested and true relationships with as many people as is possible, and in as many aspects of one’s life as is reasonable. Yet, and this is the point of this Thought, don’ require that everyone first establish that relationship with you before you give them place to speak to you, including to you of what you consider your more private matters.

Truth is truth, so should be received because it is true. The source of truth sometimes surprises me. It usually comes from one of those tested and proven sources, but when those fail, the Lord has been faithful to reach me even through my detractors.

About the truth: George Orwell said, “During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.” Pastors in Canada have been jailed for hate speech when they publicly read certain passages from the Bible. I don’t want to imprison/muzzle anyone who shares the truth with or about me.

19. The following is an accurate quote from a newspaper article. It is too good to not include in THOUGHTS, although I’ll have to work a bit harder than usual to come up with a spiritual Thought that will befit it.

“Orville Smith, a store manager for Best Buy in Augusta, Ga., told police he observed a male customer, later identified as Tyrone Jackson of Augusta, on surveillance cameras putting a laptop computer under his jacket. When confronted the man became irate, knocked down an employee, drew a knife and ran for the door.

“Outside on the sidewalk were four Marines collecting toys for the Toys for Tots program. Smith said the Marines stopped the man, but he stabbed one of the Marines, Cpl. Phillip Duggan, in the arm. The injury did not appear to be severe.

“After Police and an ambulance arrived at the scene Cpl. Duggan was transported for treatment.

“’The subject was also transported to the local hospital with two broken arms, a broken ankle, a broken leg, several missing teeth, possible broken ribs, multiple contusions, assorted lacerations, a broken nose and a broken jaw … injuries he sustained when he slipped and fell off of the curb after stabbing the Marine,’ according to a police report.”

Can anyone help us by making a quality comment?

20. We are not born with the knowledge of our calling; we must get close to the Lord in order to know what our life’s task is. It may come via a word directly from the Lord, or in a dream, or by someone who shares their observation of our demeanor and behavior. But, if we will get close to Him, we will know.

21. We have mentioned that words are invented, sometimes taken directly from a description of the need at hand. While translating the Bible into English, a word was needed for one of the Lord Jesus’ wonderful and indelible works – that being the position He gives to believers as we now stand before His and our Father. It can be described as “just as I’d” never sinned. Thus, the word “justified” was born.

Then there are imagined [?] word histories, such as “intimacy,” which may have been sourced from “into me see.” B.W. suggests that there is no real intimacy when we simply reveal ourselves to others; but that true intimacy is accomplished only when we also open ourselves to being changed by those to whom we open our selves/souls. That’s a good Thought.

22. If you ever need to go to someone whom you see working hard but at least in some unrighteous soul or action component is going backwards, here is a Thought. The Lord blocks our attempts to progress when we are moving in the wrong direction or with unrighteousness. At that time, kicking against the pricks and everything else is, by God’s grace, counterproductive. Perhaps you can lean on this as a template: [No, it is not, “I feel your pain!”] “I see you struggling. I have come to walk with you through your situation. I’m not here to judge your heart or your actions, but what you are doing goes against God’s word, and you are going to only suffer. I want to see you prosper. Now, this is what the Bible says: . . . “

It’s getting our own heads and hearts right that will help our friend; not our reciting of the template.

23. Jesus taught in parables because He did not want that which he said to be understood by the naturalness of man’s mind – Matt. 13:10-17, 34-35; Mark 4:33-34.. Other, more basic and simple things, He spoke straight forwardly so all could understand if their hearts were right. The same situation goes on in the world and in the church today. Worldly minds hear simply, but not beyond that level. The spiritual mind hears what the Spirit is saying in those words, spoken or written – 1 Cor. 2:14. Let’s look at a little parable.

In Matthew 13:44, a man is on someone else’s property. He has found a treasure hidden in the field; probably hidden there by the landowner. So, this person found the field-owner’s hidden property in the field-owners field. The finder re-hid the treasure, apparently returning it to its previous hiding place [?]. He rejoiced all the way to the bank where he converted all of his possessions into cash. Then he bought the field containing the treasure. Then he had nothing except the costly pearl and the land.

I can’t help but think that we are meant to understand that the pearl and the property are inseparable. Not only that, but that the pearl was hidden by its owner for the purpose of being found by someone who would be searching diligently for something considered to be of greater value than the field. Having found it, the finder would recognize its value and would pay whatever price necessary to possess the field and the pearl. The two were [and still are] inseparable. Notice that, no matter how desirous we may imagine the field to be, the searcher was interested in something other than the field.

Interpretation: The field and the hidden pearl together are the kingdom of heaven. The man bought them both, but not because of the field. He was after the pearl. He sold everything to possess that one thing that was part of the kingdom. We know that our initial salvation is free, but we are told that this pearl and land is possessed only if we pay for it. Thus, that “thing” is other and more than salvation in Jesus Christ. Salvation brings with it an intimacy with Him that allows us to dig in His kingdom for His hidden things. Those things have to be sought after with all our hearts, and we have to pay the full price, or we will not receive the hidden things that He offers the hungry righteous.

How do we “buy” the field and the pearl? For each of us, individually, we must get alone with the Lord and ask that question in order to get our customized answer. Jesus went into the wilderness – Luke 4:1-13. John the Baptist went into the wilderness – Luke 3:2. Paul went into Arabia with his newfound treasure – Gal. 1:15-17. He would not be robbed of his treasure so he shared it and its knowledge with no one, until it was settled that the truth was Christ alone. After he understood the magnificence of that which he had, and had sold out to Him, he knew that then he could not be robbed of it – Phil. 3:7-8. The price would be “everything,” and the pearl was the treasures of and from Christ.

No more trying to find fulfillment in things and labors, including service to the Lord. That pearl is in and of Jesus. No more need to be a success or to be thought well of in the church. No more need to prove our spirituality. When we have [and always must continue] paid for the pearl, we will have found what we are looking for in Christ. We can have fullness in the kingdom because we have the treasure of the King.

Jesus sent the multitudes away, and then explained this parable to His disciples – Matt. 13:36. His private counsel is with the upright -- Prov. 3:32. In Christ Jesus can be found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge – Col. 2:3. The new owners of the field know that the riches of heaven are ours in Him. What a bargain; and He put it there for us to find it.

24. The Occupy Wall Street protesters claim to be of the 99% of our population who are mistreated by our political system. Draw the line wherever you may, at 1:99, 25:75, 50:50, 75:25, or 99:1. There will always be upper and lower groups. The bases for division are without limit. Our gripes and the programs that come from our gripes will not solve anything. We can do our best when we relate righteously and listen to one another, but the world seems to be going in the other direction. Indeed, we should do our best, although not until the Lord’s kingdom on earth will there be true solutions.

So, 1% or any other percent can always be identified based on some method of accounting. However, the well-being of the 99% depends on who makes up that inevitable 1%. It may be kings, queens and princes; it may be working people who prospered by really meeting the needs of society; it may be bureaucrats and a ruling elite, and it may be dictators. It all depends on the ideologies adopted and accepted by the 99%.

I mean that leadership only forms and survives as the populace allows. After all, the leaders are outnumbered 99:1, are they not? As long as the 99% are getting that which they want, within reason, they are satisfied enough to not change their masters. It may be order, protection, prosperity, peace, and the like, as long as the lesser complaints of high taxes, unfair laws, restricted freedoms, a poor economy, military conscription, or low living standard remain lesser complaints. The masses determine their form of government.

Basically and crudely put, the government men have is based on public opinion. Leaders are at the mercy of the masses. The reverse, that the masses are at the mercy of their leaders, is true only to the extent the masses will tolerate their conditions.

In America’s case, first we had black slaves. When the blacks were freed, many remained marginally enslaved for another 100 years, at which time many were joined in their marginal slavery status by a still-growing number of whites. That mixed group has since been joined by corporations, the rich and the middle class – meaning that a large majority of us are now raised by and cared for from cradle to the grave by civil government of various levels. That large group of variably-enslaved, variably dependent citizens has become a force for change and control over our government.

The Occupy Wall Street protesters are only a small group among the 99% but they are pointing out to us that the slaves are now sufficiently powerful to cause trouble and perhaps to change things in the government, or to change the government itself.

We shall see.

25. Never discourage any one who continually makes progress, no matter how slowly. That’s a good and needed word to dads more than moms, in my experience.

26. Twenty five percent of babies born in America are to unmarried co-habiting couples.

27. Women are more moral than are men. They make decisions based on how their choices will impact others. That’s the basis [plus an international poll] for my saying they are more moral than are men. They also are more self-controlled and honor others’ trust in them. So, they make decisions based more on the collective whole than do men.

Men tend to make choices out of self-interest as they take a more individualist approach.

That worldwide poll was a survey of many thousands of respondents. Readers of THOUGHTS are surrounded by committed Christians, so your more personal culture may not mirror the results of that study [??].

28. The worth of a man is largely dependent upon how he treats his wife. [Signed, your wife]

29. When we get out of alignment with the Lord, we turn into “out of alignment tires” -- squealing loudly [complaining, blaming, etc.] and wearing out quickly [burnout, “I can’t take any more,” etc.]. A sensitive soul that has an ease of repentance will not get far out of alignment, so he/she is noted by the Lord and others for having minimal squeals and worn spots.

30. The Lord orchestrates our lives. He gives us the challenges we need. In the natural, we can attribute our trials to ourselves, others, the weather, the economy, etc. We can attribute them to evil, the devil, and who/whatever else we see is involved. But, the ultimate truth is that the All-mighty Master is behind it all. He does nothing except that which is designed to reveal His glory and to make us better off forever. If we don’t know that, we are stuck in the natural with only a dim view of the spirituality of all things. If we know the ultimate truth, and abide in it, life now and forever is different.

31. We are created to be able to stand alone, and to do it – with only the Lord, and many times without much [any?] evidence of His standing with us. If we will then STAND, there will soon be great reward.

Then, again, we are not created to stand alone. We have the Lord and His body on Earth. We are not to create our own desert islands, but to live as an integral of His body.

32. People of all ages, theologies, both sexes, etc. receive various sorts of revelations [dreams, visions, out-of-body experiences, etc.], each of which is tailored for the recipient according to the Lord’s plan, wisdom, preparation and care for that person or group. A child’s out-of-body experience will be genuine, but may involve sitting on the Lord’s lap and playing with animals around the throne. To some, the Lord Jesus may be scarred; to others unblemished. I am saying that those varied spiritual impressions are bonafide and real and God-given, and are customized for each person or group – the Lord knowing, planning and considering all things.

Example: During Israel’s 1967 Six Days War a gigantic image of a bearded man in a robe appeared over a unit of Israeli soldiers. They did not see it, but the enemy force that was poised to overwhelm them did see it, and ran from the field. Captured enemy soldiers corroborated one another’s story as later told to the Israeli soldiers.

Example: John the Apostle saw Jesus in a glorious form, differently than any way he had known Him during their 3 1/2 years of human fellowship – Rev. 1, 2 and 3.

Example: Muslims, apparently by the hundreds or thousands, are being granted visions or actual visits by the Lord Jesus, whom they describe as a man of love and peace.

33. Peace has been described as that brief glorious moment in history when everyone stands around reloading. Others define peace as nothing missing and nothing broken.

I desire for you the peace of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.