THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2010

1. See this, if you will, meaning apply your informed imagination to it. And while you are imagining in that way, imagine what those in Iran could be imagining.

Iran is surrounded by Americans and other non-Islamic Europeans, as follows:

1. On the east, in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where we have an army.
2. On the south, by the Persian Gulf where 11 additional U. S. warships have been added in the past few weeks, plus 1 Israeli warship. Israel has also moved in 3 of their atomic submarines, with at least 1 to stay, on rotation, “for the duration.” Consider that the 1 Israeli surface warship may be necessary for Israeli air, sea, and submarine communications, coordination and/or control.
3. On the southwest, by Kuwait which is now fully armed, and where there are numerous American bases.
4. On the west, by Turkey and Iraq, where we have a strong military presence.
5. On the north, in Turkmenistan, where we have bases and supplies; by Azerbaijan, where we and the Israelis have bases and supplies; and by the Caspian Sea.

Add to that the fact that Saudi Arabia, no friend of Israel, has recently opened its air space to Israeli Air Force jets. Israeli helicopters have been ferrying military equipment into a northwestern Saudi air base. It is noted that from that air base Israeli planes can reach Iran in the shortest possible time.

1. *The Scientist* magazine has ranked the best workplaces for scientific researchers in the world. Number one is the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, then the Weizmann Institute in Israel. Israel also had number five – the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Other countries in the top ten are the United Kingdom, Canada, France and Denmark.

Where is the United States? We were judged separately.

1. An evangelistic person will be minimalized, marginalized, or neutralized in the typical church if not made an integral part of the ministry. If made an integral part of the ministry, you can expect life and growth within the congregation, then outside.
2. We face demonic forces and their long-established effects [thus now generally considered to be normal] at work on the world. There are three significant ones:
3. Hurt that won’t be healed,
4. Haughtiness that won’t be humbled, and
5. Control that won’t be relinquished.

Notice that word, “won’t.” Those 3 traits are bad enough, without the “won’t.”

1. Faith shows a changed life. It’s a result of being born again. Internal righteousness releases external evidence of the internal truth. When the Holy Spirit is on the job, things happen. He is building a house and uses good material that man’s hand cannot produce. His stone building material has only His hands on it, fitting each of us into the project as He wants.

We can see this in Joshua 5:13, where Joshua encountered a warrior whose sword was drawn. Joshua was in enemy territory. He had been raised as a slave but in the past 40 years had become a spiritual and military leader of freed men. Joshua went toward the other warrior aggressively, not knowing it was the Lord, and challenged Him to declare Himself.

We don’t know about Joshua’s character prior to his deliverance from Egypt, but now he was brave, ready for any encounter, moved rapidly forward when encountering opposition, was ready to engage the enemy, and was clear-minded.

It’s unlikely that he was born with that character, or developed it as a slave. God knows.

1. “What is God doing among us?” That was the topic of discussion and prayer at our most recent monthly Pastor’s Prayer Breakfast here in Corpus Christi. Every denominational group contributed to the development of a clear answer. Some comments and answers:
2. There is a growing understanding of Kingdom transpiring events.
3. There is an increased desire to seek the Lord because He is God.
4. It is appropriate to speak of what He is doing, not what He is going to do.
5. The Lord has gathered us for the gathering storm, and it is not just for our idea of survival.
6. It is much bigger than we are.
7. We must know why God is doing what He is doing in our city and region.
8. Each of us is important to God’s plan in the earth.
9. We need to spend time with the Lord until we know more of His plan.
10. We need to be able to identify and articulate what He is doing.
11. He is positioning us for Kingdom results.
12. He is working in such a manner that we do and will know His priorities.
13. He is building a network for His purposes.
14. His network includes the church, governmental leaders and a business community that is befriending what God is doing.
15. He is bringing us to the place of being a strong, unified body.
16. We must understand that we are on God’s timetable and in His positions in His body.
17. We are beginning to truly love one another.
18. He is causing us to be sober and vigilant, and holy.
19. He is expanding our realms of influence.
20. He is being very strategic in how He is enlarging our tents.
21. He is opening our ears to the prophetic word.
22. During coming catastrophic events we will be in the ark.
23. He is bringing us to readiness so that we may do our job, then stand.
24. We will help one another during the coming storms.
25. Our true value on earth is as spiritual beings.

It should be noted that the meeting is about to increase to twice monthly.

1. You know the difference between “freedom of religion” and “freedom of worship.” Lately the president and others of his administration have begun to use the term “freedom of worship.” That word-change drastically changes what is protected in the First Amendment, which says, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ….” The “free exercise” wording protects those whose religion is much more than worship and more than just inside a room or building.

When you hear someone using the term “freedom of worship,” remember that that person

is taking steps toward confining religious expression to the confines of the churches’

buildings.

1. I’m going to give you a small but priceless teaching on one of the essential spiritual ingredients to leadership in the church, be it on Sunday morning in the large service or in a prayer and Bible Study meeting in a home. If you will remember and apply this teaching, you will be approved by both God and man. If you don’t remember and apply it, you will be considered a wash-out as a leader.

Here it is. It’s not unusual that a spiritually immature or unstable person will arise in an open meeting to teach something that is off base. If the leader of the meeting wonders if that ministry is of the Lord or is of the enemy, one of the best tools of discernment is common sense. If it sounds like Jesus, it probably is the Holy Spirit. If it bears witness to Jesus, it probably is the Holy Spirit. If it sounds harebrained, it probably is harebrained. If it sounds demonic, it probably is demonic. If you think the speaker should not be speaking, he/she should probably not be allowed to continue. If you think it has gone on too long, stop it.

I hope you make an “A+” on learning and applying that little spiritual teaching.

1. If we cannot hear the word of our imperfections [sins, character flaws, weaknesses], we cannot hear the word of our successes [righteousnesses]. Why? Because we will block conviction and repentance, and manufacture self-righteousness.

Selah.

1. Do you have those with whom you relate according to 1 Corinthians 9:7-14? Need help?
2. I have been doing more thinking on being Jesus’ disciple. In Luke 14, mostly in verses 25-35, it seems obvious that the Lord was not interested in gathering numbers of people to Him. It was not “the more the better.” “Great multitudes” were following Him, so He paused for a little time of a big teaching, which no doubt reduced their numbers. See Gideon’s similar experience in Judges 7:1-8 and the sons of Levi in Exodus 32:25-29.

When He said, “if any of you come to Me ..” He was not setting aside the fact that only those whom the Father drew to and gave Him could come to Him. He was calling forth that godly response from each person whom His Father had gathered in that multitude. Paul’s example in Acts 9 testifies to that process, as stated several times in the Gospels [John 6:65].

Then the Lord used the closest, most God-given relationships of family life and one’s own life to contrast the quality and quantity of love for Him that is needed before He will label us disciple.” Don’t forget that He has gone everywhere He tells us to go [Matt. 12:46-50].

As if it is not enough to forsake family to follow Him, He then says we also have to die to everything and everyone else. He not only must be preeminent but must be our everything [Mark 12:28-30]. Here in Luke 14 He uses the word “cannot.” In verse 33 He says, “.. no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.” That’s very clear.

So, I see where I have and have not qualified per the Lord’s word. He is working to make a disciple of me.

1. Quiet confidence. That’s how you can identify a person who has spiritual strength. Isaiah 30:15 says: “.. in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” That means being calm, relaxed and free from anxiety. That person is taking a nap in the Son on the Rock.
2. One of the methods the Lord has used over the years to “toughen” my righteousness has been to keep someone closely involved in my life who is a test of areas of my weaknesses. From the beginning of my spiritual walk, I can see that I have never been without at least one who has this spiritual muscle-building ministry of tester.

There are no rewards in the hereafter for that ministry, but those around them who pass their tests are greatly rewarded. Those rewards cannot be lost. Moths cannot eat them and they will not rust. Without that ministry, the church would be flaccid and lukewarm. With it, provided we engage the enemy righteously, we develop muscles and zeal.

1. In 1 Corinthians 15:29 it is mentioned that some “first generation” Christians were being baptized for the dead. Paul used that, not to explain it or describe proper [water] baptism, but to show that believers believed in the resurrection and in [water] baptism.

Lots can be said about this verse. I think that those dead were God fearers and/or believers who had died without being water baptized, and that subsequent believers were being baptized for them as proxies. It’s interesting that Paul was not, here at least, drawn into the debate of how much water was necessary, or even if water baptism was essential for salvation.

Good going, Paul. May your tribe increase!

1. You may recall leaning that Christopher Columbus was a Bible-literate/believing Christian. Science [as it was at that time], seafaring navigation [as it was at that time], and the Bible [as it was understood at that time] told him that the world was round. When he proposed sailing westward to get to India, he was ridiculed. He wrote: “All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit because he comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures.”
2. A brother told me today that the Lord doesn’t talk a lot because He doesn’t have to convince Himself. I’ll add that He also does not need to convince anyone else.
3. God is very busy, isn’t He! That’s an observation, more than a question. Time is in Him and He is not limited by it. Time is a creation of God, for mankind’s sake, like directions and distances and measurements. Like the Law, they were given for us, not to be over us.
4. Here is another version of that London gravestone: “Here lies Solomon Peas, under the trees and sod; but Peas is not here, only the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God.”
5. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Whosoever will may come to me?” Well, He meant exactly that! The real question is, and those to whom He was talking knew it, what sort of situation was He calling them to?

That situation was [and still is] no home, one set of clothing, living in the open most of the time, being persecuted, having none of their own money [Judas kept the money], being in danger of losing their lives [to countrymen and Romans], being social outcasts except to the nobodies, leaving their families to an indefinite fate, losing their reputations and possessions, etc., etc.

Jesus made it clear; “You, you, and you cannot be my disciple unless you,” 1) hate your life, 2) hate your family, 3) leave your job, 4) are ready to believe what I teach you, even though it may be contrary to the teaching of your religious leaders and will cause division, and 5) give up all your possessions. That was the condition to which Jesus invited whoever would come!

He commanded us to make disciples also, throughout all the world, starting here in our churches. He did not want green fruit, only ripe fruit. You cannot make disciples of green fruit. That would be like throwing pearls to swine.

Those who heard Him, saw His works, and saw the price to be paid – those were the “whosoever may come.” He was not urging us to load the church with those who never were committed, or those who wanted to go to heaven instead of to hell, or those who would require continual nursing and urging and cajoling and begging or those who considered it the reasonable side of the argument that Jesus was/is the Messiah. Jesus made disciples – only disciples.

Only disciples can make disciples. Disciples naturally make disciples. Disciples must make disciples. Non-disciples cannot make disciples; they can only make non-disciples. Apple trees produce apples; they are true to themselves.

Whosoever wanted to join with Jesus and his willing outcasts were invited to come along with Him. It was a natural thing for Jesus to come to earth for our sakes. It is a natural thing for disciples to go forth and make disciples. It was impossible for non-disciples to walk with Jesus. It still is impossible.

1. If “those days” were not shortened, no believers would be physically delivered [Matt. 24:22]. So those days will be shortened [literally, “amputated”] with the breaking of the sixth seal which indicates Christ’s coming and the commencement of the wrath of the Day of the Lord. It is God’s mercy that the church is not appointed to God’s wrath [1 Thess. 5:9].
2. Why has Israel had such a tough time of it from its beginning? It has been Israel’s unwanted but divinely assigned task during her long walk through the centuries. One reason may be that it is for the benefit of the church. Israel, while being blamed for most of the world’s problems, is still taking most of the pressure off of the church. When the complete number of Gentiles has been brought in, then comes the time for Jesus Christ’s revelation to the Jews. Until then, their eyes will be blinded, per God’s plan. It is tough being a decoy, but it is for Christ’s bride.

Thus it should be no surprise that we are commanded to help Israel, our decoy. The first and most vital way to help them is to share the Good News with them. Then comes “stand with them.” They are not perfect, but neither are we. Bless them.

1. There are many notable priests found in Scripture. Aaron and his sons were first. Ezra was a priest [Neh. 12:26]. In fact, he was the son of Seraiah [Ezra 7:1] who was the last high priest of Solomon’s Temple. Among the prophets, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zechariah were priests. In the New Testament, Zacharias and his son, John the Baptist, were priests. Early church fathers considered John the apostle to have been a priest. If so, that would explain how John had free access to the priests’ quarters and why he was well-known by Caiaphas, the high priest [John 18:15-16].
2. Remember that “Shalom” has power to it, other than the feel-good definition of “peace.” A power definition is “authority that destroys all chaos.” Another good remembrance is “In essential things there must be unity; in non-essential things there must be liberty; in all things there must be love.”
3. We must avoid personal agendas among the brethren. However, we should be so adequately informed by the Holy Spirit, and so purposeful therefore, that those who do not know us should be of the opinion that we are obviously driven by a personal agenda.
4. Soft protestors among us are a blessing. In my experience, they are needful and are to be trusted. Anything of the flesh that rises up against their protestations is immediately shown to be exactly that – of the flesh. That’s not to say that they are not wrong factually, but that our flesh/flash reactions are nakedly displayed as such when others’ protests are softly offered. Most of my “soft protestations” have come from my wife and have prevented small mistakes and large disasters.
5. Leadership of any sort and all levels has the responsibility to stand in turbulent waters where streams come together, so that downstream the flow is smooth.
6. A younger brother for whom I have some spiritual responsibility asked me why, early in our relationship, I did not answer his questions with direct answers, especially from Scripture. The answer was easy. His early questions were challenges, which presented me with a spiritual battle, and which I engaged by going to the root of the problem. His later questions were open-minded queries, to which I gave direct answers, usually from Scripture. That’s progress. Transformation is the focus. Oftentimes, simple information is not the best weapon. The truth has various presentations and battle-formations.
7. There seems to be two faithful stances in life that saints take. One is that we have to be ready to unite, defend and attack at a moment’s notice because the devil is going about like a lion seeking whom he may devour. When something understood to be adverse happens, those saints quickly join in prayer to turn the tide to their and God’s favor. They certainly are prayer warriors.

Then there are those who recognize that the Lord is always in charge, that the devil, that great deceiver, is greatly deceived, and that he can never do anything that surprises the Lord or has the ability to diminish Him or us, and that the Lord only plans good for His people. The idea of “good” to these saints does not have to be a temporal type of good or be pleasing to the flesh.

That’s the message of the Gospel of Job and, I perceive, the good news of Scripture. When these folks encounter adverse times, they know that it is part of the Lord’s master plan that has touched their lives. They ask Him for information and act in faith, never doubting that the Lord is absolutely and continually in charge. If they must suffer, they are thankful that He has counted them worthy to join Him in His [always-redemptive] sufferings. That’s where I reside.

The same things happen to both groups, and perhaps the outcomes are the same, but the daily lives and going through the episodic ordeals are markedly different.

1. If you are among those who believe that Jesus did not drink alcoholic beverages, consider Luke 7:34. That is an open acknowledgment, a clear statement. If that is not enough to convince you of the truth, the Lord will bring you to the place of belief in Him and His word by the easiest way you will come.
2. There are times when you must put aside your focus on righteousness [notice “focus”]. At those times we have to act with decisiveness, with assertiveness, boldly. Those are not times to tippy-toe around a person, nor to carefully couch a tough word to a brother or group. Those are times like none other of those times when “how” you say something must be carefully spoken. Those are “you are the man!” [2 Sam. 12:7] and Acts 5:3, 9 times.
3. The things the Lord is doing here are partly being done in a 3-step process. One; He has raised up the 5-fold ministry of the word [Eph. 4:11]. That well-rounded ministry, usually in small segments, is common in the church. However, the 5 components are usually fragmented. If not fragmented, they are not integrated [as follows] and often are self-promoting or competitive.

Two; that 5-fold ministry is not only present but together multiple days per week and several hours each time and have continued so for over 2 years. As a result, much individuality of persons and ministries have been dealt with “around the table” by the Holy Spirit. We have grown in our love. Our commitments have been tested and strengthened.

Three; we have begun to die to ourselves for the sake of our united calling, and have begun to walk the way of the cross together.

The more those processes proceed, the more power God grants. He works not only through us, but around and beside us. When that happens, it is so very obvious that He is doing it.

1. Try this: “If I hadn’t believed it, I wouldn’t have seen it.”
2. Martin Luther was spiritually convicted and energized by Holy Spirit revelation in Habakkuk 2:4, in which is said: “the just shall live by faith.” If you want that detailed:
3. Who are the just? Paul answers in Romans 1:17.
4. How shall they live? Paul answers in Galatians 3:11.
5. By what faith? Paul [?] answers in Hebrews 10:38.
6. At an unimaginable cost, the Lord Jesus did what was necessary for our Father to accept us into the Family. Yet, that was not enough of Him. His work was not over. He still has the “job” of interceding for us as we go about the Family business [Heb. 7:25]. So, when we talk to our Father we know that all has come to us through Jesus and that His ongoing ministry necessarily persists. All of that is why we pray “in Jesus’ name,” isn’t it.

Now I want us to rotate 180 degrees, from looking at the Lord when we pray in His name, to looking at what it means to pray as part of the Family – meaning, in relation to our spiritual siblings. That means [to me] that I am praying as part of Father’s Family – in addition to my being part of my brother, Jesus. In a way, we hold the hands of our brothers while reaching out to our Father through Jesus.

Yes, I know that the Family is indeed Jesus’ body. That is essential to what I am saying. It means [to me] that in that prayer I am representing the Family and that I am living-out that Family life day by day. It means that I am uniting Jesus’ earthly body with His heavenly body. It means that my conversation with Father is based on my communion with my Family, not only with my brother, Jesus.

I think that when we pray without living in healthy communion with one another that we “pray judgment upon ourselves” exactly as we do at the Communion Table when we are not in healthy communion with one another [1 Cor. 11:27-29]. It’s comparable to a husband’s prayers being hindered when he is not properly relating to his wife [1 Pet. 3:7], or when we have not forgiven someone and we want our Father’s forgiveness [Matt. 6:15], or when a husband who is praying but is poorly relating to his wife and the Lord turns His ear away [1 Pet. 3:7], or when we mistreat our brother but think we love the Lord [1 John 4:20].

We can see how we are doing with the Lord, whom we do not see, by seeing how we are doing with His Family, who we do see. That prevents our being deceived. That means that our on-going relationships with our siblings are our heavenly report cards of our on-going relationship with the Lord.

According to my experience, this aspect of prayer is a common aspect of the prayers of our Catholic brothers; more-so than of our Protestant brothers.

Pray it over. At least think it over. Perhaps you, too, will enjoy some of that bittersweet, from-the-heart conviction which changes souls.

1. Throughout the centuries of the Church Age, the Lord has revealed and re-revealed His truths. They were not only truths, but were timely truths. And, they were not only timely truths but were also accompanied with graces, such as Holy Spirit power, love for Jesus and His written Word, love of the brethren, desire for holiness, renewal of Spiritual gifts, etc. We call those times of revelation “spiritual revivals” or “outpourings of God’s Spirit.”

At the same time, there were several other things that happened. They were not godly things. They were unrighteous things of the church as it had already developed in those times. Commonly, the established church rejected those who had become new repositories of those truths, and they rejected those renewing truths.

In some centuries, the church martyred the repositories – both human and printed forms. In more recent years, simple denial, rejection and expulsion have sufficed to insulate the church and segregate the two groups. New denominations were formed to: 1) promote life according to the renewing truths, and 2) stand against the perceived carnality and rejection of the established churches.

Much can be said of righteousness and unrighteousness on both sides of church splits, but that is not the direction I am going with this thought. The fact is that we have had a proliferation of denominations, a greater and greater ease of church splitting and the formation of more of the independent and isolated churches.

I should also add that many churches are “contrarian” in attitude. They have a determination to remain faithful to their roots and against that which went before or comes after. It is “to that which went before” that I want to address the remainder of this paper.

Every work of God’ Spirit, even if the human result has been the division of Christ’s body, had a built-in, back-up blessing – a holy preservative for the church. It’s for the preservation of God’s truth and of our service to Him such as were present and being produced in both groups before the split. That’s the Lord’s message in Matthew 9:17. That means [to me] that, with all of the divisions in Christ’s body, there are multitudes of insights and truths, and types of and desires for services, but that each will do the Lord little or no good until His body comes together.

At this point let me say that the Lord’s idea of His church coming together has little or nothing to do with changing the ways we believe, or the names on the church’s buildings, but has much to do with coming together as His Family, bought by the blood of His Son Jesus, possessors of His one Spirit, and chosen by Him to be who we are to Him and to one another – forever. It has to do with fellowship as the New Testament defines fellowship in 1 John 1 and elsewhere.

I will add that our obvious divisions, for which the world ridicules us, are designed to be assets. The Lord knew that our skin colors would persist, that the church would have the rich and the poor, and that there would always be different perspectives on everything of Life and Scripture. But when the world sees us loving one another ***in the face of our divisions*** they will know that Jesus’ words were and are true [John 17:20-23]. True Christian fellowship in the face of common, obvious, worldwide-type differences is one of the most powerful evangelistic tools that the Lord has made available to the church.

When we begin to have that quality of fellowship, for which the Lord once for all extended His arms to give to the world through the church, and in these appointed days is again extending His arms to give to Corpus Christi through His one parish, He will fulfill His word beyond the expectations of any of us.

Here is an in-church or housekeeping matter. Our flesh often prevents our acceptance of traditions, customs, forms of worship, wordings, etc. of other denominations. Each great tradition of Christianity has hallowed and refined elements of life and worship that the others do not have, or at least have varying lesser degrees of focus. For example, Pentecostals are strong on the Holy Spirit, each person being led by the Spirit, and the gifts of the Spirit; Evangelicals are strong on the written and the Living Word, and of our individual stance before Him; and Catholics are strong on church order, the spiritual family, and the Fatherhood of God. Each tradition certainly overlaps, but the traditional emphases are there.

It is obvious [here I have an urge to say it this way: “He who has eyes and ears to see and hear, let him see and hear …”] that each tradition has weak points that the other two traditions could strengthen if we loved one another and began to act upon that love. But while we respond with, “but they believe ….,” or “but they did/do …,” and would never consider putting a cross on our steeple because “that’s Catholic,” we are far from overcoming our flesh in order to have practical spiritual fellowship around the throne.

On the other hand, Catholics are put off when they consider having freedom in the Spirit, Pentecostal -type Holy Spirit-leadership in the Mass as their standard service, or having open communion with Protestants. And, Evangelicals will be led by Jesus according to the Scripture except for those verses that “no longer apply,” and especially “not by the Spirit” as are Pentecostals.

Church order and reverence are a mark of Catholicism, but less so of Protestantism.

The list is long. I can see why in his old age John the Apostle, while being carried about on a litter to deliver his last sermons, condensed everything he had to say down to: “Little children, love one another.”

1. Don’t forget, saints, that the Lord is a resistor [James 4:6]. He is also a promoter; and He performs His word.
2. Has anyone ever told you that they have done everything possible to break a bad habit but failed, then asked you what else they should do? Or, it may have been that they were trying to develop a good habit and were likewise failing. What’s to say to them?

In it all, they were saying, “I cannot, so what else should I do?” The answer is, “You cannot! Stop trying to do that which you cannot do.”

Sooner or later we must stop trying to do that which we cannot do. The Lord lets us keep trying until we not only know we cannot, but until we stop trying, and then trust Him to do the work.

Believe it or not [and when we are yet in our failures and trying we do what we cannot do, we do not believe this], all of our failings are worth it after we learn that we cannot do it. Then we can go to the Lord, tell Him we cannot, that we are a hopeless but hopeful failure, and turn it over to Him [Luke 18:27].

It may be hard to grasp, especially if we don’t have a rounded knowledge of the Lord, but He places godly character above our immediate deliverance from besetting sins. Brokenness, humility, faithfulness, and many more character traits are more important than common besetting sins. They are all important, but bringing us to the end of ourselves opens the doors of our hearts and minds to much more than would deliverance from certain sinnings. Yes, He is more interested in character development than He is in immediate deliverance from all of our sinnings.

1. No one can become a spiritual adversary to the devil until he has embraced the cross and learned to do so daily. A dead man is not fearful, nor is he able to run. A dead man is naked and doesn’t care. A dead man cannot be hurt or killed. The dead via the cross are already victorious; they are no longer fighting to gain a victory.

1. B. W. sent along a teaching on the kingdom of heaven, in which is stated some characteristics of yeast, which we are. The list:
2. Yeast looks weak, like nothing.
3. Yeast does not intimidate the dough.
4. Yeast never becomes dough.
5. Yeast changes the dough.
6. Yeast is never intimidated by the size of the lump of dough.
7. Yeast works quietly.
8. Yeast is activated by heat and pressure.
9. Yeast is useless in the package.
10. Yeast has one job – influence.
11. Do you ever have a problem supporting/submitting to ordained authority when that authority is less than you and others had hoped for? When that situation presents itself [meaning, when the Lord presents it], we have a choice. We can be 1 Samuel 10: 26 or 27. Take your choice.

Let’s go through some verses of 1 Samuel 10 starting at verse 20. Notice there that one of the methods the Lord used to select His chosen leader was by lots – a role of the dice or a draw of the straws or some other [in the natural] method of chance that Samuel and those with him could use to discern God’s will. As yet, they did not have Proverb 16:33 or Acts 1:26, but they did have Leviticus 16:8 and Joshua 14:2.

In verses 21-22 Saul is found hiding from his destiny, even though a proven man of God was proclaiming it. In verse 23 we are given a glimpse of God’s and Samuel’s [successful] efforts to affirm Saul: “Everyone, look! He is really a tall man.” What a weak affirmation! In verse 24 Samuel tries to encourage the people by strongly emphasizing Saul’s height. As a result, the people were [somewhat] encouraged and shouted, “Long live the king!”

At this point, in verse 25, everyone has the spoken and the written word of God on this matter. So, what were the results? In verse 26, those who were valiant and had hearts for God went with him. In the last verse, those who were worthless to the Lord stayed home. That’s still the way it goes. God’s people will follow/obey/honor those whom He has elevated to leadership. That means Christians to civil leaders [Rom. 13:1-7], wives to husbands [Eph. 5:22-27], flock to shepherds [Heb. 13:17], etc. You notice that Saul could not have cared less. After all, who was he to presume to do anything about those who despised him, their king?!

1. Got grace? [a bit of East Texas redneck lingo, there] Want more, especially for yourself? Apply yourself to building up those who are doing the opposite to you.
2. As a born again, Spirit baptized son of God I have everything that Jesus had. However, I was born with a sin nature and learned the ways of sin before I became God’s son. As a result, I am having to be molded into the image of my Father’s only begotten Son, Jesus.

Jesus did not have my disadvantage [of having to unlearn a sinful life] because He started human life perfect. But, He had to be faithfully sinless from beginning to the end, from birth to death on the cross. So, I did not have His disadvantage [of having to have faithful sinless perfection].

If given a choice, I think I would have chosen the one He assigned to me.

1. If you don’t like to engage in mind-expanding thinking that touches only lightly on Scripture, just go on to Thought No. 44. This Thought is a launch from Thought No. 42. It goes like this:

It is God’s plan to make us like Jesus and for us to do what He did. There is only one way to be like and do like Jesus, that being to be like and do like Jesus. In the ultimate of my imagination on that topic, that means we must be born upon one of those billions of planets out there in space [as was Jesus on Earth], live and die as did Jesus [becoming Redeemers], and be Sons-instruments of the Father to bring others to Him [as did Jesus].

I don’t know any other more mind-stretching way to be and do like Jesus. Do you?

1. “Nobody goes there anymore; it’s always too crowded.”
2. How are you living your life, for success or for significance? It has been said that most people live the first half of their lives for success, and the last half for significance.
3. Do you find yourself thinking that the Lord will sustain your Christian testimony before the world because you have served Him faithfully, or because you have boldly proclaimed His faithfulness [“.. so watch Him be faithful to me.”], or because He has been faithful so many times before? Yes, He will always be faithful – to Himself, meaning to His word and to His people – but it’s our interpretation of His faithfulness that I am calling into question.

A faithful, available-to-the-Lord saint has the assurance of God’s faithfulness, even if the saint is martyred or starved or beaten or forced to see his family slain before his eyes. He does not need to see the Lord’s faithfulness in temporal ways. He already sees the Faithful One’s faithfulness through 20/20 spiritual eyes.

Another thing about being in that situation. I think that when we are living in that sort of availability He will “draw near” to us and keep us remarkably informed about what is going on, and why, even though it may look to the world as if we are blind and dumb and misled and forsaken.

Remember what they said about our Brother when there showed no evidence of God’s faithfulness: “He helped others, now let Him help Himself,” and “Have some more popcorn. He called on God to help Him. Let’s see what happens.” And “nothing” happened. God was faithful; so was His Son. No temporal proof was required. Nothing has changed.

1. A small town is one where you can dial a wrong number and still talk for 10 minutes.
2. Recently I was in a non-religious meeting. It came time for the traditional invocation before the meal. The leader said: “Let us take a moment to reflect upon our choice of the source of our inner strength.” What a thought!
3. There is so much more between us and others, and between us and the Lord, beyond our puny obediences. Obedience is important; probably more important than we realize from one obedience to the next, but the Majesty does not rise or fall upon our obediences. We may, but He doesn’t.
4. Directly due to obesity, this is America’s first generation of children that will not outlive its parents.
5. It is more important to know your brother who has a problem than it is to know all about the problem that your brother has.
6. Hasta la vista, saints!