THOUGHTS OF JUNE, 2019

1. For a Christian, the definition of “worship” speaks of a relationship with Jesus Christ and our expression of our sense of His worth. For us, worshipping Him does not require a special place or circumstance. Worshipping Him requires being in the Spirit and comes from our union with Him, from within us. Worshipping Him requires the Truth because it must be according to His word.

While in worship there is no sense of loss or need. We are fulfilled because we are satisfied with the person, Jesus, whom we are looking at, speaking to, and receiving from. We worship Him anytime and anywhere because He is always with us. It is hard to get religious with Jesus because when you know Him places and things for His worship are not required.

1. It is very good to have God’s super-perspective on things. When there is a natural event, whether we call it “good” or “bad,” we have to deal with it because we, too, are yet in the natural. That means feed the poor, compliment to prize winner, help the injured, work hard, mow the lawn, go see a doctor, etc., but at the same time we should be asking the Lord what He is doing [His super-perspective] in every matter.

Examples: Natural Situation No. 1) Who killed King Saul? Why, those Gentile enemy soldiers, of course. But how about 1 Chronicles 10:14? Natural Situation No. 2) Just as in Acts 5, the Lord is always in the matter and doing things that to the uninformed may look like He has been beaten by the devil. Natural Situation No. 3) Remember Job. Natural Situation No. 4) Would God give His people laws that were not good for them, and ordinances they could not live – Ezekiel 20:25? There are natural perspective and there are God’s super-perspectives and we must deal with and in both of them.

Many of our laws are bad -- not at all good for us or for anyone. But if we don’t see the Lord’s hand [get His perspective and purpose for us] when we are forced under the yoke by bad governments, we will not recognize our role but likely will respond unrighteously. Example: We have our wildernesses and captivities, as did Israel. They are painful but good for us if we don’t buck under the yoke. For us to pick and choose our own way among God’s painful love-actions brings on sudden and irrevocable adversity.

The Bible is full of such examples that round out and perfect our understanding of the Lord and what He says, if we will listen to Him. He brings the murderous enemy upon His people for several reasons, and tells us why. Even as children of the light, we tend to turn off the light when the going gets tough, go along in our best human understanding, and end up in the ditch. There is evil in this world but everything has God’s purpose, and we can experience His purpose in everything – Rom. 8:28.

1. As a physician I know better than to refer a patient to a failed physician, or to send a failed physician on a house call to a patient. But that is done in religious organizations, as has been exposed and publicized throughout the world in the Roman Catholic Church [our currently most publicized example]. Pedophile priests were removed when discovered, and sent to another parish church where they often continued in their pedophilia. “Those bad Catholics” are not the only ones who do that sort of thing or have done so in the past. This week the Southern Baptists, America’s largest Protestant denomination, had a conference on immoral leadership in the Baptist church. Read 2 Kings 17:24-41 [which happened and was recorded for our sakes – 1 Cor. 2:12-16] and weep for the blindness of that sort of behavior.

By the way, Protestants. When we see our brothers being exposed [that other branch of the church being cleaned-up] it is good to keep a righteous perspective that pleases the Lord. He is a good and faithful swamp drainer who starts with His house -- 1 Peter 4:17. The lesson to us is that we are to start with our self-swamp, then move on to help our neighbor with his.

1. Our brothers and sisters in China are going through tribulation and martyrdom as never before. Their spiritually blind government is increasing its pressure on Christians by closing churches and Christian schools, arresting their leaders, and demanding that church leaders serve Communist Party interests above the call of Christ and the scriptures. Cash rewards are paid to those who report foreigners and others who engage in religious activities. Every person in China is inescapably watched by security cameras attached to facial-recognition software. The Chinese government’s goal is reported to be able to identify and locate any person in China within *three* seconds. That is almost unbelievable electronically, politically, and spiritually.

But our family there continues to serve the Lord Jesus, cherish His word, and spread the gospel. They love their country and its leaders, but they love Jesus more. Their persecution increases the quality and quantity of the church. Their blood waters the Seed of the church. Yes, prayers, even our prayers, even your prayers, make a difference for those who are giving their lives in service to the Lord.

1. Let’s keep our perspective on what is going on as this world “falls apart” locally, nationally and internationally. Remember that it is actually “falling into place,” as that which happens must happen as the Lord is preparing His creation for the big day. If a big downtown skyscraper is going to be built, a lot of demolition of the old buildings must first take place. It will look like an unplanned mess before the wonderful and beautiful is recognizable.

Don’t forget that things are not as they seem to be. We have to have “eyes that see” in order to know what is going on. The earth was created in 6 days, although every indication other than God’s testimony of creation says it has been in existence for billions of years. Noah spread the word that the world was going to have a flood that would cover the world even though world history and everyone else said otherwise. God came to earth as a human but no one knew Him as He was. The end of things as they have been is upon us, but it does not seem to be so. Nothing is as it seems to be, and that which really is is not seen as it is.

So, what does that mean. First, always remember that all is falling into place in the hands of and under the direction of the Master, the Creator. His plan is, and the results will be, that the currently [partly] hidden Christ is bringing all things into subjection to His will. The end results will be absolute perfection of His creation. We are being processed. Ninety nine percent of the world may not know that, but we know it. A few shepherds knew He was born that night, only Simeon and Anna worshipped Him in the temple at His dedication, two or three years later those few wise men worshipped Him, and He died like a criminal, but in those examples all the others did not know that things were not as they appeared. All was on an obviously perfect course, but it did not seem that way.

Things are not as they seem, unless we see things as Jesus saw them.

1. Paul was a good shepherd of the sheep whom Jesus gave him to watch over. He wanted the Lord’s currently finished work in their lives also to be seen [worked out] in their flesh. Their being blameless before God and man was on his mind for their sakes. That’s not surprising, is it. We want our natural children and those of the Spirit to be blameless and beyond reproach. Paul wanted them to stand out in society and before the Lord – 1 Cor. 1:8; Phil. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:2, 20; 5:7; Titus 1:7. Peter desired the same for God’s flock – 2 Pet. 3:14.

So, when your kids complain of your high-set mark for their behavior, saying, “Daddy, you don’t want us to be actually perfect, do you?” the answer is “Yes, I do. I don’t want you to be any other way.” Follow that with your loving assurances that they are already perfect in your eyes and that you stand ready to forgive them for making mistakes. Thereafter must follow healthy amounts of evidence that your do truly look at them that way, as you work with them to know Jesus, His truth, and His walk.

1. Some translations, including the KJV, translate Zephaniah 3:9 to say that the Lord would give His people Israel one language, “one pure language.” They had been scattered among the nations for many centuries and had spoken their local national non-Hebrew languages plus some forms of religious Old Hebrew which was colloquialized with other languages, until in the late 1800s and early 1900s when Eliezer Ben-Yehuda “revived” the Hebrew language. He “invented” many new, modern words and wrote his dictionary. When Israel became a nation in 1948, that new Hebrew became its official language. There are no other examples of a natural language, without any native speakers, subsequently acquiring several million native “first language” speakers. Thus, according to Zephaniah, Ben-Yehuda [and others], fulfilled God’s word. And Ben-Yehuda did it without a computer.

But, yet, my hero in such matters is still Alexander Cruden, who wrote his “Unabridged Concordance of the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha” in the 1700s. He wrote it during and between bouts of lifelong extreme depression for which he was committed to institutions, and often had to live and work at God’s grace in others. But he persisted at his calling through his derangement and associated problems and completed his masterful work and its revisions by 1762, or thereabout. Thumb through Cruden’s Concordance and praise the Lord for that brother and his life’s amazing work.

1. Considering all of the Lord’s encouragement for us to have more of His life, more blessings, more victorious living, more power, more overcoming of His enemies, and more living up to our potential, it is almost surprising to learn that He wants more self-denial, more bearing of our crosses, more boasting of our weaknesses, more joy in our trials, more winning by losing, more gaining by giving up, more working by resting, and more acceptance of both the bitter and the sweet as God’s gifts. You students of scripture and veterans of real Life will recognize God’s wise hand in your soul in those ways.
2. Which spiritual quality [value] most allows us to “judge all things?” There must be several, but [at least today] I choose to nominate “peace.” Actually, it is probably a medley of spiritual qualities, like with all else of life. All humans continually judge things and people, but the Holy Spirit teaches and qualifies us for judging righteously and accurately. The keeping of our peace allows our souls the opportunity to make decisions properly.
3. In Hebrews 9:28 we are told that when the Lord Jesus appears at His second coming it will be “for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.” That means He is coming for those who are His, who are born again of His Spirit, who are already members of the eternal family of God like He is.

That quote also points out that the matter of our sin [ the sin nature that had alienated us from God until we were born again by receiving God’s Spirit (life, nature)] has already been dealt with in our lifetime on earth, and that we are “in.” But, before we go to be with Him, the matter of having our sinnings [bad deeds] dealt with should have been handled by us and our new Father through our prompt repentance of them while on earth. Any remaining sins on our “unwashed record” must be handled later at the judgment seat of Christ, the time reserved for determining our rewards and losses. In our present life we mess-up often, so must take forgiving soul-baths as needed so we can regain and maintain our clean slate.

When we appear before Him, we need not have any negatives [unforgiven sins], only positive righteousnsesses.

1. The end result of God’s work is for the world to have a one world government – His. As always, the end result of the devil’s copy-work in the world is also planned to be a one world government – his. In our life-time, the nations have made “progress” toward forming a one world government. When I was a boy, it seemed like everyone was aware of the dangers of a one world government, but now so much progress in that direction has been made that it is spoken of and worked for openly. Communists work to establish dictatorships for their one world government through overt force and war. Socialism uses subterfuge and politics. Both are tools to bring about the anti-christ’s currently-developing New One World Order.
2. God the Son gave up equality with God when He emptied Himself and submitted to being a man – Phil. 2. He did not stop being who He was [His identity as God the Son], but He gave up all else of Himself, all that He had as who He was. Thus, as a human, He could say that the Father was then greater than He.

On earth Jesus was tempted and suffered in all ways that we are tempted and suffer, but He did not sin. As God’s children, we can say that many times we do not sin, but that sometimes we do. Jesus can now truthfully say that He is touched by and understands the feelings of our infirmities. He experienced all of the joys, sorrow, anger, frustrations, loneliness, persecutions, despair, and abandonment that we experience. He was weak in His humanity, had thirst, fatigue, pain and temptation. He bled when they beat Him. He even died an unfair and painful death, and was resurrected from the dead because He believed that promise of His Father. The One who was immortal became mortal so that we who are mortal can become immortal. Wow! What an offer!

1. No nation on earth can have a national defense policy that loves its enemies. It would be political and national suicide. A nation could be benevolent, but not like Jesus and His kingdom will be throughout the earth in the millennium, or like in and between faithful individuals now. At this time, nations and their subdivisions are still ordained by God to bring their swords against evil doers, and believers are to obey civil governments [but not to sin].

It is not yet Jesus’ time for us to fully manifest His earthly kingdom. It is obvious that He and His kingdom are not of or like this world – John 18:36. In the meantime, let’s love one another, obey our civil rulers, lift up our King who did the same, and be patient [but not sin].

1. The United States of America’s Declaration of Independence says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights.” An unalienable right is a right that cannot be bartered away, or given away, or taken away except in punishment of crime. The role of government is to “secure” these rights, not grant or create them. In securing such rights, the government is God’s minister to advance human flourishing.

Christians believe that men and women were divinely created; that they have equal dignity; that rights were given by a personal God; that the right to life [from conception to natural death] is an irrevocable gift to all humanity; that the right to liberty comes from corresponding duties; and that the pursuit of happiness is the individual’s means to seek that human flourishing.

Those “old white men” in 1776 did well. They and their work were not perfect, and should be judged by life and circumstances as was given them to live in during their day, including God’s then-revelation to them and to the world. God and His word do not change, but each person is held accountable for that which he or she has been given.

1. More on “the way up is down” and “things are not the way they appear to be.” The Lord uses broken things and broken people. His people who are broken seem to always be praising the Lord for any and every reason. It’s like He goes to the junk yard to get His prime material. Soil has to be broken before wheat can be planted; wheat has to be crushed before bread can be made; bread has to be broken before it is eaten; the alabaster box had to be broken before its perfect contents could be used; and Peter had to be broken before he could become an anointed believer and leader.

Noah had to be an ostracized but persistent carpenter and preacher before he and the Lord saved his household and established his testimony. Abraham and Sarah had to become completely unable to fulfill God’s purposes for them before they and the Lord completed it. Moses’ mother had to give up baby Moses before she could receive him again and he come into his place in Egypt. At age 40 Moses had to fail in his efforts to move forward in God’s calling, until at age 80 he was ready to be used by the Lord. Gideon had to reduce his army of thousands to only 300, and be a disappointment to his father, before the Lord would use him to rout their powerful enemy. Samson had to become an utter failure before he became Israel’s hero. And Jesus of Nazareth had to become a national failure and even die like a criminal before He could fulfill His calling in God.

All of those, and millions more, had to die to themselves and to their sense of service to God before they could become God’s nobody somebodies and accomplish His callings. Some did not see their successes until after they died their earth-deaths. [Yes, I said that correctly.] But they obtained God’s approval and the approval of those who would see and follow their examples of faith-filled [although sometimes wobblily] lives.

The Lord held back from granting many of them lives filled with answered promises, the usual earthly rewards for earthly faithfulness. Why? Because their lives were actively tied to our lives. That sacrificial process is common in families where loving parents work hard and sacrifice for the success of their children. The results of their faithfulness were tied directly into our lives [that’s your life and my life] so that we are the fulfillments of their faithfulness, and their rewards. Apart from us they, their lives, their works, and their faith would not have been made complete – Heb. 11:39-40. They and we produced God’s greater glory and revealed His products of their lives. Thank you, previous saints.

Yes; again, Jesus is our prime example. His work was finished on the cross but the finished product of His work is yet to be revealed. He saw, and we see it now with our eyes of faith, and the time is near at hand for it to also come into worldly and heavenly existence.

Remember: “the way up is down” and “things are not the way they appear to be.”

1. It seems that Jesus was nailed to the cross at 9:00 a.m. and died at 3:00 p.m. – Mark 15:25-37. The morning time is reasonably definite and the evening time is not so definite, but reasonable. In Exodus 29:38-46 the daily sacrifices were to start in the morning with the first of the day’s two lambs [Jesus was nailed to the cross at the “third hour”] and daily sacrifices were to cease in the afternoon at which time the second of the day’s two select lambs was to be sacrificed [Jesus died].

Then came the daily clean-up time, which was no small task after a day of defecating animals, totally bleeding them out, dissecting them, skinning some, removing their internal organs, and whatever else. The priests and Levites did not have high-pressure water hoses and a modern sewer system for cleaning the area, or washers and dryers for their garments. The priesthood had its privileges but also its difficulties. They also rotated their days on and off duty because their homes were scattered about Israel and had back-home duties of family and delving out temple money and food to the poor.

1. Do you think you will face religious persecution during this, your first pass through earth-living [your second will be during the millennium, and your third will be after the earth’s surface is remade and God with His New Jerusalem comes down onto it]? Extreme persecution? Within the next 10 years? The persecution that Christians are facing around the world may be only the tip of the iceberg of what is soon ahead for us. If you are not aware of the current levels of religious persecution [especially against Christians], and that it is already in your town, you may not be prepared for tomorrow and could be blindsided. The next generation will have it tougher, but that will still be during our lifetime.

Many of us will have the opportunity to pray for our nation while we are being persecuted and martyred. The trials will be difficult. It may be difficult to believe now, but your love for the Lord will be tested and many who now profess their faith in Jesus will recant [such as by taking the mark of the beast vs. dying]. In the midst of that degree of suffering, every person has to renew his commitment to never compromise his relationship with the Lord. Most will compromise.

It helps to prepare ourselves now, but at the time of trial we will be renewing our commitment and “really” surrendering to the Lord in our new situation. It will be a time for us to re-vision God’s and our purpose for being here in this life, and decide anew whether we belong to ourselves or to the Lord.

1. During times of persecution, some of us first realize the opportunity of becoming overcomers. Although we have that opportunity daily, we tend to coast along when the going is smooth, not noticing the smaller opportunities for being daily overcomers. But when the pressure comes, we quickly snap to attention in regards to what is really going on in this life. [Am I talking only to myself?] That scenario leaves us short of being a pillar in God’s house [Rev. 3:12] because a pillar functions full-time or the house collapses.

Overcomers have learned that ministering to the Lord is a life, not an “as needed” occasion, not dependent on time, place, or persons. It is a heavenly matter that is not dependent on earthly matters. Their Father had been looking for those who would worship Him in Spirit and Truth [John 4:23], and He had found some who would give Him what He was looking for. They live in God’s presence, so do not need to “come into His presence” or await a holy day or special church service. They overcame those religious earthly things because they live in His presence continually. They are the overcomers.

NOTE: On worshipping our Father in Spirit and Truth. Worshipping Him in Truth is according to the truth of God’s word, centered around Jesus’ example and teaching. Worshipping Him in Spirit is also according to the truth of God’s word, and is centered around the spiritual tools of worship distributed among His Body according to His word. Simply listed, those tools are the Holy Spirit supplied tools of a) the nine spiritual gifts of 2 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, b) singing in the spirit as in 1 Corinthians 14:5, c) ministering in the anointing of the five-fold ministries of Jesus as in Ephesians 4:11-16, and d) with the motivational gifts of Romans 12.

In 2 Kings 25:13-17 is recorded the carrying away of the tools of worship. God’s people had already stopped using them, but instead had been using them for worship of other gods, so God removed them through the Babylonians. Seventy years later, when they were ready to use them again [and rightly] He gave the tools back to them, unchanged – Ezra 1:5-11. Without the utensils, God’s people would have been unable to worship Him, even though they may have had the show of a temple. That is a lesson and a revelation to the church, that we can have “church” without being equipped for worship.

1. We have been grabbed up by the Lord. It was His personal choice. We were made to be participants in His family and life, and granted His precious and magnificent promises. We earned none of that. By accepting those promises for ourselves on both long term and continual basis, we can and do become partakers of His divine nature [meaning being like God is]. That describes our escape from the corruption that we had, and that the world is still full of.

Now we are responsible [with God’s continuing grace] for being diligent to apply ourselves by faith toward moral excellence, biblical knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. You recognized that Peter wrote those things in 2 Peter 1:2-7. Few of us expect the Lord to carry us along on flowery beds of ease, although we usually hope He will.

Peter meant for us to do our duty, not for duty’s sake but because we know and see the Lord engineering our circumstances and we watch for the opportunity to step into them obediently. At that point the endorsement of God flows and the angels rejoice, and it is recorded by our name in the Lord’s record book in heaven.

1. I have been thinking about various qualities of communication methods between the Lord and us. it may be a fruitless or minor effort, but I’ll offer it to you as a Thought. There are different depths or heights of communications with the Lord. They seem to be related to our intimacy and involvement with Him and others, and all qualities probably occur from time to time in us:

1) That in which He does not explain or say anything to us, but He is active in “presence” and we know it. It can be likened to human relationships when we stay with someone during their severe trial or even during some especially pleasant event. The meaningfulness of “presence” is powerful.

2) The verbal communications He grants for us to hear and to speak with Him, and invites us to initiate at any time. It is a time for friends, although He is the almighty God and we are “only” His kids.

3) The lack of His response, the silence that says, “I have spoken on this; just go do what fits with what I have already said.”

4) The heart to heart relationship in which we know He wants us to do our heart’s desire, to jump in and act, based on our knowing and sharing His nature.

5) His guidance for those who relate to Him through education, their intelligence, and human logic and understanding – including by the use of scripture.

Probably every saint enjoys some of each method or quality of communications.

1. Christian, have you learned by watching your life, or the life of someone you admire, that the times of quality experiences with the Lord come mostly during or soon after our “lion’s den” events? And that we tend to pray more, and more earnestly, during trials? We pray with abandonment when we have a death sentence pronounced on us, such as, “It’s cancer!” Trials and growth go hand in hand, and it is not by accident.

Spiritual growth and God’s revelations commonly come to us through our trials, so why do we do almost anything to avoid them? It is not that we should self-develop some trials for righteousness sake, but if someone steals your car, find him if you can and give him your keys and car title – Matt. 5:38-42. Then be blessed. That’s God.

1. What is Satan’s top project? He wants to be above God, to be worshipped, to have Satan worshipers. So, do you think that current Satan worshippers are playing spiritual games, or are they doing exactly what Satan wants? No, then yes, theirs’ is no game. The same Satan who tried to get Jesus to worship him in the desert is still working to get us to worship him.

Don’t be afraid to think and talk about Satan. We have the One who is able and ready to defeat him on a daily basis in our walk. Read scripture regarding Satan and his ways, and be who we are meant to be. In these times of the end we will become holy spiritual, informed and equipped, or be defeated.

1. There is a steady and inevitable march toward peace in the Middle East. Yes, toward peace. The Creator and ongoing Architect of all life and action has a [non-workable] seven-year peace plan to deceive the anti-christ and his followers, who will use it to affirm peace with Israel and Middle East nations. By that I mean to say that the Lord is giving the anti-christ something that will not work. It will be like putting a virus in a computer and giving it to your enemy. The treaty will likely be affirmed after the rapture, which means we current believers won’t be here to deal with it, but we should let it be spoken about [such as here-in] so those who become believers after the church is removed from the world will be informed.

Fear not; it’s all under God’s control. The Lord began announcing it 2,649 years ago with Daniel’s writings, and continued it with Jesus’ confirmation. Now, that’s deception, when something can be openly proclaimed for that long, by the God who cannot lie, and you still don’t believe it [that’s Satan and countless others].

1. What is it that builds up your self-esteem? Is it the success in life [society] and Life [spiritually] of your children and grandchildren? Is it your personal success professionally and financially? Is it the books you have written or your publicity on television and the newspapers? Is it your good works among the poor? If we are looking for self-esteem, we can find it to some extent on many levels.

The problem is that the more we see of ourselves, the less we see of Jesus; and the more we see of Jesus the less we see [and care to see] of ourselves. Paul wrote that of all the things he had that could make him self-confident [and self-righteous], he counted all of them as manure, dung, excrement, feces. So, I’ll ask my original question another way. Why go back to the manure pile to build up your self-esteem? Is not there some other source of what you want and need for yourself?

Yes, and again Paul supplies the answer: a) we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we should – Rom. 12:3. Notice that his advice leaves us some wiggle-room to think just a bit high of ourselves if it is true and righteous. b) He had no confidence in his flesh – Phil. 3:3. Wow! He had learned something in which I am a neophyte. c) He counted all things as loss for the sake of Christ, the surpassing value of growing in intimacy with Him, for his citizenship in heaven, for the exchange of his earthly body into conformity with Jesus’ glorious body when He subjects all things to Himself – selected from Phil. 3:7-21.

That is a quality answer. It delays present gain for something better later, which is always a clue to quality advice. It did not take a lifetime for Paul to come to that, so hopefully we can gain time from his encouraging teachings.

1. Israel was in the wilderness with Moses learning to rest in the Lord’s faithfulness to His word. Those who learned to rest in their wilderness came out and went into the Promised Land. Those who did not learn that rest, died in their wilderness. The same process is processing today in the church.

The Promised Land for Israel was a physical location where those who rested [trusted and obeyed] in the Lord were to drive out the people of the Land, and possess it for themselves. The part of the church now who have entered into the rest of God have not entered into a geographic location, but into a relationship with the Lord wherein He fulfills His word in their lives wherever we are. In that relationship we are to have battles, in which we sometimes are beaten on and bloodied [spiritually, emotionally, and perhaps physically] but we have victory as long as we continue in faith and proper obedience. If we shrink back into the flesh, we experience spiritually that which the unfaithful Israelites experienced – Rom. 11:17-22. That is not about heaven vs. hell, but about living in or out of His promises. Living in them requires faith and obedience. Remember Romans 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11-12.

God’s biography of Caleb is a great example of entering the Promised Land and persisting until the end – Josh. 14:6-14. Joshua was apportioning the land to the 12 tribes. Caleb at age 85 stepped forward and requested the toughest land and enemy, which Moses had promised him because of Caleb’s exhibited faith in God. “Then the land had rest from war.”

That helps us understand that which is written in Hebrews 3:6 which was and is written to Christians. It says that we are of Christ’s house “if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.” Again, this is not about heaven vs. hell, but about entering into and staying in God’s rest. When we don’t, we have “an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.” Read that to mean that “we fall away from belief in the livingness of God,” which is another way of saying we don’t trust Him so we don’t obey Him [which is very logical to the flesh]. More on this in Thought 34.

We believers are part of the construction of His house, the church that HE is building [if we are adequate material and are available to Him] – Heb. 3:6. That’s a basic principle of any good builder, which is the point of Hebrews 3 and 4; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 3:15. He is building by His plan, with the lively stones of man; He is building a house that is standing.

1. A dead body cannot be killed because it is already dead. A person who has died and come alive in Christ Jesus cannot be killed either. Their testimony is, “Not I but Christ” – Gal. 2:20. They have already given up their lives, God has raised them up from the dead, and they are living in Christ. That person cannot be killed and cannot be defeated.

But let’s not leave it there as a theology and act like we are living more than we are actually living. We don’t want to have our theology correct as head knowledge only, without it being stamped “true” by our way of faithful living. And we do not want to discourage other believers due to our obviously incomplete perfection. Either of those stances would wipe out all of us. But, neither do we want to remove self-responsibility for our spiritual growth. It must be added that we must labor until Christ is formed in us – Gal. 4:19. That requires confident, deliberate attentiveness to the process.

He is in us as soon as we are born again [or else we are not born again] but choosing the crosswalk daily forms Him in us. Forming Him in us must be closely related to being spiritually mature, or having reached the full measure of the purpose for which a person was created – Col. 1:28. Yes, once again the way is back to the cross -- “Take up your cross daily and follow Me.” We have not yet crossed the finish line, but we are closer to it today than we were yesterday.

1. Only a bit more on the United States Constitution, which is the basis of all of our laws and therefore can be seen as a statement of our religious and social beliefs, while not putting it forth here as a big topic. The Constitution was meant to encourage just, stable, and free government – government that protects the rights of its citizens. It allows many variations of law, but speaks strongly and only to just, stable, and free government. That means when the Constitution is attacked, our foundations are being attacked. We know of the importance of foundations. Guard righteous foundations; attack and utterly destroy unrighteous foundations in ourselves or wherever found.
2. Past scientific theories have said alien civilizations may be living in our galaxy, based on seven factors – including the formation of star formations and how long creatures are able to survive. But now Oxford researchers say the simplest solution to the question of aliens in our galaxy is likely the truth: There’s no one else out there. That’s a cosmosteticly [help yourself to a new word] depressing study result to certain folks who have decided that there is a “high probability” of extraterrestrial life [without any proof]. So, humans are flying solo in outer space. Although anything is possible, we should not be surprised after everyone has failed to detect any signs of life in space, especially of intelligent life.
3. Due to the church’s increasing apostasy, the dark side continues to enlarge the kingdom of this world, including in that religious organization called “church.” Our U. S. Constitution guarantees religious freedom, but lack of vigilance in politics, compounded with the church’s departure from God’s word [and its resultant spiritual anemia], has brought forth something deceptively named the “Equality Act,” which is working its way through Congress.

Under the act, Christian schools and churches, and religious colleges and universities, will have to join in with the rest of the nation by having sex-common changing areas, restrooms, and living facilities, and conform to the law’s requirements on sexuality and marriage. As has already been seen, large segments of the “church” have gone along with the trend before the “Equality Act.”

Stand firm on God’s word, speak up, stand together, don’t rebel, and take our knocks when they surely will come. This and much more must happen before the Lord steps in and establishes the obvious-to-the-world kingdom of God on earth. Along with the pain involved, look at it as an opportunity to show Jesus’ lordship now, which is being a light in the darkness. Your light may be shown from the top of a hill, like was Jesus’.

1. The Lord’s love has caused Him to do all sorts of extreme things for His people because of and in spite of our waywardness. Praise you, Lord, for your steadfast love! That you remember us is remarkable, and brings forth hallelujahs! We are a very common people. We quickly forget your abundant kindness, your mighty deeds on our behalf. You redeemed us from the pit, and we remember that so seldom. It is a wonder that your anger is not kindled against us, but instead you hear our cries and have compassion on us. Blessed be you and your name, Lord.
2. Have you noticed that the church around the world no longer needs encouragement or edification, that it is spiritually alive and successful everywhere? Have you also noticed that it has attained to faithful unity [God’s one Catholic-Protestant-Pentecostal church]? Have we all attained to the full knowledge of Jesus Christ and all come to God’s planned spiritual unity? Right; so have I neither. All of the tools necessary for those accomplishments are still needed today – Eph. 4:11-16. If they are still needed, the Lord has not withdrawn them. Where are they; why have they gone?
3. Have you noticed? The process is like a rope around the neck, being pulled tighter not by the hand on the other end but by the person of the neck. The process: 1) First are incidental sins that are common to everyone but in this process are not repented of, then 2) the incidental sins become habitual so that the person becomes known for them, then 3) they are explained, defended and justified, and then 4) they are boasted of.

As I have noticed that, or something like it, in a few believers, I recall that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that I was and am one of the foremost. Because I know that, and have been granted an ongoing ease and frequency of remembering it, my patience grows for those who are in the rope and tugging it tighter on their necks. What can be done other than prayer, counsel, patience, love, and offering of oneself to them biblically?

When Jesus said the rich young ruler [Luke 18:18-27] was too rich in money to enter the kingdom [rulership] of God, I think the same can be said of those with ropes around their necks, who are pulling them tighter. They are too rich in themselves to submit to/enter into the rulership of God. Lord, deliver us from ourselves.

Some of them will be delivered from self-strangulation. Isaiah knew that, so wrote in 49:24-25 that definitely the prey of the mighty man can be taken from him, and the captives of the tyrant can be rescued, the captives of the mighty man will be taken away from him, and the prey of the tyrant will be rescued. Why? Because the Lord will contend with those mighty ones and will save those who are our “sons.” That describes a bonded relationship, where prayer, counsel, patience, love, and offering of oneself biblically are found to be most effective.

Along with that semi-conclusion, I am reminded that our increasing perfections and the best we can do in our improved condition are not good enough to get anything done, including in our intercessions. It is in and through Jesus and His position with His and our Father that opens heaven’s doors to us.

1. Here is a significant teaching of Jesus’. It is very general, but very significant. In Mark 10:23-25 He says it is hard for rich people to enter the kingdom of God [being defined as faith in and submission to God]. When challenged on that by His disciples, He firmly repeated the difficulty by saying it is very hard for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God [my paraphrase]. To emphasize His point, He added that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. No matter how we interpret that allegory, we understand the difficulty.

Humanity allows money, property, status, and other forms of temporal, usually good, prosperity or comeliness to get ahold of us, to become our gods. Jesus did not say that if we are to be His disciples we must be penniless, that He will reject us if we don’t give up all to follow Him, but that He must be our all if we are to completely follow Him. In His kingdom He alone has preeminence because 1) HE IS THE LORD and 2) we cannot serve two masters.

It’s not the money and things, but what they [usually deceptively] do to us, to our souls, to the “me.” For example; 1) The rich “me” identifies myself according to my riches; 2) the smart or wise “me” identifies myself according to my brain power; 3) the good “me” identifies myself according to my goodness and good deeds; 4) the patriarch “me” identifies myself according to my progeny; 5) the strong or beautiful “me” identifies myself according to my body ability or form; and so on. So, the “me” is the biggest obstacle to my entering into the kingdom of God. The more self and stuff we have, the greater the difficulty and less chance we have of entering into that precious [rare and valuable] relationship of Jesus and “me.”

I have not arrived at any peak of success in these matters, but I have been exercised in them by; 1) voluntarily living and serving the Lord for years on the poverty margin [while always having sufficient for family of 5 kids and often 5 to 10 others in-home], 2) by lacking notoriety while working “off stage” among the disadvantaged where I was a nobody [until the Lord elevated me, after retirement, into leadership in the profession], 3) by my personal failures that leveled the playing field of my goodnesses, 4) by enough failures among my progeny to control my patriarchal pride, and 5) by enough commonness physically and in sports to keep my self-evaluation well under control. Having less in all ways, at least at times, has been a blessing. It has been good for Jesus and “me.”

1. The things that happened in the Old Testament happened to them [God’s people] for our [God’s people] sake and were recorded for our [God’s people] sake – 1 Cor. 10:11.
2. God sent Moses back to Egypt to redeem His people, Israel. That compares to our heavenly Father sending His Son, Jesus, back into the world to redeem us, His people, His elect, who were soon thereafter called Christians.
3. The Israelites were baptized [immersed, placed] into Moses [meaning no matter how good or how bad they were, He would deal with them only through Moses] when they crossed the Red Sea. That compares to our being baptized [immersed, placed] into Jesus [meaning no matter how good or how bad we are, He will deal with us only through Jesus] when He brought each of us out of our Egypts.
4. They then spent 40 years in the wilderness learning to trust and obey God [as He met their every need], as preparation for entering the good land that their God had promised them, where all of God’s promises would be fulfilled as they faced overwhelming opposition daily from the inhabitants of that land. That compares to the years we spend learning to trust and obey the Lord [as He meets our every need] which, if we do, brings us into the good place [in this life] where all of God’s promises are fulfilled as we face overwhelming opposition daily from Satan’s lower domain.
5. Moses died in the wilderness, as did Jesus die in this wilderness.
6. Faithful Joshua [Hebrew for “Jesus”] led the people of God into the promise land, as did [and does] Jesus lead us into the place of fulfilled promises of God in this life.
7. When Joshua was apportioning sections of the promised land to the 12 divisions of God’s people, a faithful man named Kaleb stepped forward and requested a certain mountainous section where giants lived in walled cities. Caleb was primed with trust and obedience. He wanted the hardest and best, got it, possessed it, and God’s rest came to God’s land and God’s people. Read Joshua 14:6-14, then read Hebrews chapters 3 and 4. I will sketch its outline:

1) Like Moses was building God’s house, Jesus is building God’s house.

2) He has much material to choose from, but uses only a) good material that is b) available for His purposes.

3) Therefore, much of His other material, that He has selected and paid for, will not be used. The poor grade and unavailable material may be used later if and when it is upgraded and available for His use, which may be never.

4) This house has to do with Jesus using us, building His house using the material of born again submitted, humans who take up their crosses daily and follow Him.

5) This house, the house that Jesus is building, is standing firm and is breaking down the gates of hell – Matt. 16:18.

6) The many house copies built by religionists are falling because they are not built by Him. They have evil and unbelieving hearts that cause them to fall away from the living God. They fall in their wildernesses. That is going on all around us.

7) Jesus’ house stands strong, fights its battles, and remains in God’s rest. This is called the Sabbath rest which is full-time and now. This is going on all around us, among little people.

1. Here is something to think about. It can be a bit depressing to the flesh, which is good because it redirects us to the source of our goodness [righteousness], from deeds to believings. Paul wrote, “Put on the new man which was created in God, in true righteousness and holiness” – Eph. 4:24. How do we put on the new man? What is the new man? The new man is the new me, Jesus. “For me to live is Christ.” The way to righteousness is by faith in the living Christ within us, not in my/our greater efforts to be righteous.

Believing [faith] the truth [God’s word] does take effort at times, but the intent of the effort is to believe unto [produce] righteousness, not to simply do something good that [we hope] would establish our righteousness. Remember that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness – Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6; [and James 2:23 where he says true faith requires its brought-forth deeds].

In all of that, the Holy Spirit points out that our lives are exchanged lives, not changed lives. We live and breathe out of Christ’s life in us instead of being dedicated to being better. Our exchanged lives certainly will produce a changed life in due time, but it will not be because we worked on reprograming our own souls to do better.

The exchanged life is the Lord’s work, a work of ongoing grace through faith. Remember that Jesus was not righteous because He did righteous things, but because He was righteous. Doing flows out of being. Being is the focus – knowing who and how we are in Christ Jesus. That is bad news to our religious flesh, which would rather instead that we try harder.

1. Jesus and the prophets gave us many signs of the nearness of His return, but only one is the sign. Some signs of the nearness of His return are:
2. Israel will be reborn as a nation – Jer. 23:1-8. [It is.]
3. There will be a marked increase of travel and knowledge – Dan. 12:1-4. [There is.]
4. Wars, famines and earthquakes will increase – Matt. 24:4-8. [They have.]
5. The Jews will be persecuted and hated by all nations – Matt. 24:9-10. [Almost 100% true.]
6. False prophets will be misleading many – Matt. 24:11. [I’m unsure of the “many.”]
7. The increase of lawlessness will diminish most people’s love – Matt. 24:12. [Currently bigtime.]
8. God and His things will be replaced by self-interest, like in the days of Noah and Lot – Luke 17:26-30. [Electronics is sending the gospel everywhere full-time but its spread is unnoticed by the world, the world’s news services, and the worldly church.]
9. The Jews will be in control of Jerusalem – Luke 21:24-28. [They are.]
10. Israel will be a vibrant, world-leading nation – Matt. 24:32-34; Luke 21:29-32. [It is.]

Every attempt to spread the gospel does not further the gospel. Paul taught and testified to Governor Felix [without choice] for two years without results [Acts 24:24-27] but Peter’s obedience to the Holy Spirit led to a revival among chosen Gentiles – Acts 10:all. The gospel cannot be restrained if presented when, where and how the Holy Spirit leads the lives and words of its servers, as was well-spoken by the wise Pharisee, Gamaliel – Acts 5:34-39.

So, what did Jesus say is the sign of His return? “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come” – Matt 24:14 [accents mine – ed.]. That’s about as close as we can come to calculating the time of His coming, and it appears that that is about as close as He Himself could come – Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7. Work and be ready.

1. Synonyms or similarly-meant words are interesting. For example: Prize, booty, reward, prey, blessings and similar words are motives to faithfulness. They require some sort of action on our part to which the Lord is pleased to respond with some form of grace. The Lord told Jeremiah that the going was to be tough but if he would persist in faithful obedience Jeremiah’s own life would be his reward – “But I will deliver you on that day, declares the Lord, and you will not be given into the hand of the men whom you dread. For I will certainly rescue you, and you will not fall by the sword; but you will have your own life as booty, because you have trusted in Me, declares the Lord” – Jer. 39:17-18.

The Lord, including through Jesus, presented earthly and heavenly rewards to His people to motivate us unto faithful, good behavior. But don’t mix your understanding of rewards with His gifts, which are given without any requirements for us to receive them. The greatest gift is of Jesus Himself to the world, then of His resurrection life to His elect.

1. Human nature. Jesus knew it well; He created it and, as a spiritually-minded human, was spiritually and naturally perceptive – Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18-25; Gen. 3:all; Matt. 12:25; Luke 6:8; John 2:24-25; Rom. 1:16-32; 2:14-16. Because His human perceptibility is given to humanity, and His spiritual perceptibility is given to spiritual believers, we can see it being used all around us. Of course, there are those who are not at all perceptive, those who are perceptive for their own benefit, and those who are perceptive for the benefit of others. Such is life and human nature.

The knowledge of human nature is used by psychologists and counselors and many others, usually for the benefit of others. As I watch politicians who are running for public office, it is easy to see how some pander to the public, such as by promising largess from the pockets of others by the unlimited force of taxation. That is disheartening. On the other hand, some politicians see in that approach the erosion of social character and of the work ethic, plus the development of chronic dependency, so they work for limited government and increased individual responsibility while teaching and legislating more on personal and group voluntary generosity to meet the needs of the needy.

That is an example of the fallen nature of man, the need for spiritual renewal, and the ongoing cultural battle for the souls of nations. Some nations appear to have lost the battle [France, for example], while others are still battling [Britain and America, for example]. Trust the Lord, love your brother and neighbor, and look up.

1. The gospel is rapidly spreading all around the world. Not only in South Korea, and not only in China, but in Iran. Adjusted for population, the fastest growing church in the world is in Iran. It owns no buildings, owns no property, has no bank accounts, has no centralized leadership, has no denominational leaning, yet is multiplying like crazy. What the Lord is doing there is staggering, and is an example to the church world-wide. More people have come to faith there in the past 40 years than in the past 1,400 years.

Note on the church in China: Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain Covenant Church is in prison for his faith. In a sermon dated September 9, 2018 he said, “If President Xi Jinping does not repent he will perish.” He added, “When we are not being persecuted, we spread the gospel. And when persecution comes, we continue spreading the gospel.” “We believe that we have the responsibility to tell Xi Jinping that he is a sinner!” “The government he is leading has sinned greatly against God, for it is persecuting the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if he does not repent, he will perish.”

Another note: Speak the truth [no matter the opposition or the cost], Speak up [or others will think you are part of the apostasy], and don’t rebel [rebellion is always a sin, so not of God].

Evangelism brings persecution, of course, but the Iranian church is not asking us to pray for the removal of persecution. They see that persecution is essential for growing the church. They know that when persecution stops, the church stops growing. [Hear that, America!] They want the gospel to spread far, wide, and deep in Iran.

When Iranians come in contact with Jesus of Nazareth, something beautiful happens. [Nothing should be new about that.] But when they realize that they have been bought and saved by a Jew, and read about Him in the Jewish Bible, they are completely transformed. Pray for our family in Iran. They are being blessed with Life in the midst of their dying world. That which is pleasing to the Holy Spirit is pleasing to them. They are experiencing the victory that is given through the lordship of Jesus Christ to born again humans – 1 Cor. 15:57.

1. We cannot imagine anything more blessed beyond the Lord’s full-time loving care. He pats us on the head when we do well, and He pats us on the rear when we don’t do well. He is silent when we need to live by the truth and faith He has already established in us. He is obviously active when it is time for us to step up a notch. There is no escaping His attention and actions, His love, His direct and continual oversight. All of our circumstances are perfectly customized and timed for us and He is in them with us.

Why is it important for us to know, believe and live all of that? Because of what will develop from knowing, believing and living all of that, meaning the laying down of our will – a major step for a Christian. If we do not know, believe and live His all-mightiness, we continue being fools for the world. [That’s not good.] When we know, believe and live His all-mightiness we become fools for Him. [That’s very good.] We can embrace the cross when we know and have the Victor and His victory.

1. Shangdi zhufu ni gus am bi sinn a ‘coinneachadh a-rithist, mis hermanos y hermanas.