THOUGHTS OF MARCH, 2010

1. IT SEEMS THAT THE WORLD IS BECOMING POPULATED WITH DEMENTED PEOPLE, INCLUDING SAINTS. THERE ARE VARIOUS REASONS FOR DEMENTIA, INCLUDING AGE [SENILE DEMENTIA], ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE, STROKE, LOW THYROID HORMONE, PARKINSON’S DISEASE, AND MANY OTHERS.

I MENTION THIS BECAUSE THOSE SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA HAVE AN AREA OF HOPE WHILE YET IN THIS DETERIORATING BODY. HERE IT IS: AS OUR “KNOWLEDGE/MEMORY” FACULTIES DWINDLE FROM DISEASE, OUR WISDOM MAY INCREASE THROUGH FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD. AS WISDOM REPLACES KNOWLEDGE/MEMORY, KEEP YOUR PEACE. SHARE LIFE ON THE WISE SIDE WITH THE YOUNGERS. YOU MAY NOT REMEMBER ALL OF THE FACTS, BUT YOUR WEALTH OF WISDOM CAN BE EXPECTED TO PERSIST LONGER THAN YOUR RESERVOIR OF KNOWLEDGE.

I HOPE THIS GENERAL OBSERVATION APPLIES TO YOU AS IT DID TO MY DAD. WHEN HE NO LONGER KNEW MY MOM AND NOT EVEN HIS OWN NAME, HE COULD STILL GIVE WISE ADVICE WHEN ASKED.

1. THE LORD IS THE TRUTH, ALWAYS. HE DOES NOT NEED THE FACTS TO MAKE HIS CASE, BECAUSE HE IS THE A-TO-Z TRUTH, ALWAYS. THERE WAS NOTHING, BUT WHEN HE SPOKE THERE BECAME SOMETHING. THERE IS COMING A DAY WHEN HE WILL SPEAK INTO NOTHING THAT WHICH NOW IS SOMETHING. HE TAKES NOBODIES AND MAKES THEM SOMEBODIES. HE TAKES SOMEBODIES AND MAKES THEM NOBODIES.

SATAN IS A LIAR, ALWAYS. HE USES FACTS TO SUPPORT HIS CASE, BUT HE IS STILL A LIAR. NO MATTER HOW MANY FACTS HE LINES UP, THEIR SUM AND EFFECT ALWAYS RESULTS IN A LIE. WHEN, BEFORE GOD, SATAN IS ARMED WITH THE FACTS ABOUT ME [AND PERHAPS ABOUT YOU], HE LEVELS CHARGES THAT NAIL US AS REPROBATES WHO HAVE NOTHING GOOD OF OUR SELVES -- HE HAS HIS FACTS RIGHT. WHEN HE SAYS WE ARE UNLOVABLE AND CERTAINLY DO NOT DESERVE GOD’S LOVE, AGAIN HE HAS HIS FACTS RIGHT. BUT HE HAS NOT TOUCHED ON THE TRUTH.

NO ONE WHO IS RECEIVING THIS ISSUE OF MY THOUGHTS NEEDS FURTHER ELABORATION. I KNOW EACH OF YOU. SATAN CAN DEAL IN THE FACTS ABOUT YOU AS MUCH AS HE WANTS, BUT THE TRUTH WINS EVERY TIME.

WITH THAT IN MIND, HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH THE TRUTH TOWARD YOUR BROTHER? DO YOU BECOME EMBROILED IN THE FACTS? DON’T IGNORE THE FACTS, BECAUSE WE DO HAVE TO DEAL WITH EARTH-LIFE PEOPLE AND SITUATIONS, BUT WALK IN THE TRUTH IN THIS LIFE WITH YOUR BROTHER.

1. BODY LANGUAGE SPEAKS LOUDLY, BUT I THINK WE CAN ALSO LEARN A LOT BY LISTENING TO OUR AND OTHERS’ WORDS. EVEN THE CASUAL LISTENER KNOWS THAT WHEN SOMEONE SAYS SOMETHING, THEN SAYS SOMETHING LIKE: “OH, I DIDN’T MEAN TO SAY THAT?” SOMETHING OF THAT PERSON’S SOUL HAS BEEN INADVERTENTLY REVEALED.

FOR EXAMPLE, PRAYER IS A LIVE CONVERSATION WITH THE LORD, SPOKEN WHILE BEING CONSCIOUS OF HIS PRESENCE, STANDING FACE TO FACE, LOOKING INTO HIS EYES. THUS, I CRINGE WHEN I HEAR MYSELF SAY TO SOMEONE: “ALLOW ME TO SAY A PRAYER, PLEASE.” AT THAT POINT I REALIZE THAT I HAD BECOME DETACHED FROM MY WALK WITH THE LORD AND WAS ABOUT TO SEND OFF AN IDLE WORD, HOPEFULLY IN HIS DIRECTION.

THAT’S ABOUT THE SAME AS DOING A SERMON OR A WEDDING. THAT LANGUAGE REVEALS A VERY IMPERSONAL ACTION, WHICH MAY BE AN ACCURATE REVELATION OF OUR THINKING.

1. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE FEEL LIKE THERE IS NOTHING GOING ON IN OUR LIVES, FAMILIES, CHURCHES, ETC. I SUPPOSE THAT A MOTHER HEN KNOWS BETTER THAN TO THINK THAT WAY DURING THE 21 “NOTHING IS HAPPENING” DAYS NEEDED TO HATCH HER CHICKS, BUT SHE STAYS ON THE JOB UNTIL SHE RECEIVES THE REWARD OF HER EXPECTATION. AN ADDED ALLEGORY IS THAT SHE CAN HEAR THE CHICKS PEEPING WITHIN THE INTACT EGGS DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS – MUCH LIKE WE PEOPLE OF THE LIGHT KNOW THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS AND CAN “SEE”THE DAYS COMING WHEN THE LORD IS ABOUT TO DO SOMETHING. IT’S LIKE THE MORNING STAR WHICH SHINES BRIGHTLY DURING THE VERY LAST HOUR OF DARKNESS.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WE CAN GET OURSELVES INTO A DEAD SITUATION OR “RUT.” IN THAT CASE, THE LORD IS TEACHING US SOMETHING IMPORTANT, LIKE “YOU DIDN’T CHECK THIS OUT WITH ME, DID YOU!” BUT, A LIFE-RUT IN ITSELF [ASIDE FROM THE LORD’S USE OF IT] IS A GRAVE WITH BOTH ENDS KNOCKED OUT – STILL A GRAVE. AS A YOUNG MAN, DRIVING ON SOME DEEP-RUTTED MUDDY ROADS, I KNEW HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO GET OUT OF A DEEP RUT.

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THAT SORT OF SITUATION, TURN TO THE LORD OF ALL SITUATIONS. HE IS THE TRUTH, THE WAY AND THE LIFE.

1. HERE IS A VITAL THOUGHT. WHAT WAS/IS THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST? I AM THINKING OF THIS IN THE WAY OF “WHAT WAS THE GOSPEL HE PREACHED?” REMEMBER THAT HIS GOSPEL/GOOD NEWS WAS NOT THAT HE WAS THE MESSIAH. HE PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE KINGDOM WAS “AT HAND,” “AMONG YOU,” THAT ALL SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD, AND THAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR THE KINGDOM TO BE MANIFESTED (NOW) ON EARTH.

WE KNOW THAT HE, THE KING AND MESSIAH, WAS HERE IN PERSON, BUT HE DID NOT PREACH THAT ASPECT OF THE GOSPEL. HE ACKNOWLEDGED IT, BUT RELIED ON THE SPIRIT TO MAKE THAT ANNOUNCEMENT TO GOD’S PEOPLE WHO HAD THE SCRIPTURES THAT SPOKE OF HIM. HIS SERMONS DEALT WITH THE KINGDOM, NOT WITH THE KING. ANOTHER WAY TO SAY THAT IS THAT HE DID NOT BEAR WITNESS TO HIMSELF IN THAT WAY. THOSE WHO/THAT WHICH BORE WITNESS TO HIM WERE HIS FATHER, THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE SCRIPTURE, HIS WORKS, AND PEOPLE.

1. WE COULD TALK ALL DAY ABOUT WHICH MUSICAL INSTRUMENT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT TO PLAY. ALL FIVE THAT I HAVE TRIED HAVE FIT IN THAT CATEGORY. I FLUNKED OUT OF THE RHYTHM BAND IN FIRST GRADE WHEN I COULD NOT PLAY THE TRIANGLE OR THE CLAPPER. [CAN YOU TOP THAT?] I DIDN’T DO MUCH BETTER ON THE BANJO, UKELEHE OR ELECTRIC GUITAR. HOWEVER, THE QUESTION HAS BEEN SOLVED BY NONE OTHER THAN LEONARD BERNSTEIN, THE CELEBRATED CONDUCTOR. HE SAID: “WITHOUT A DOUBT, IT IS SECOND FIDDLE.” I THINK HE WAS RIGHT.
2. I CANNOT USE THE TERM “GOD ALLOWS” WITH ANY PEACE OR CONFIDENCE OF ACCURACY.

I SEE THAT THE LORD DUPED SATAN INTO TORMENTING JOB, AND THAT THE ENTIRE PROCESS WAS INITIATED AND FOLLOWED CAREFULLY BY THE LORD, AS HIS GRACE MADE A WAY FOR JOB [1 COR. 10:13-14].

I SEE THAT THE LORD SAYS HE WILL NOT ALLOW US TO BE OVERCOME IN A TEMPTATION AS WE LEAN ON HIM.

IN REGARDS TO OUR FRUITFUL OR UNFRUITFUL SERVICE TO HIM, I SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR FATHER’S PRUNING AND HIS CUTTING OFF. BUT IN BOTH CASES IT IS HIS HAND DOING THE WORK [JOHN 15:1-2], EVEN THOUGH HE MAY USE GREASY INSTRUMENTS SUCH AS SATAN, TORNADOS, MURDERERS, ETC.

THUS, IN ALL CASES I KNOW THAT I AM ON THE POTTER’S WHEEL, IN HIS HANDS, AND CAN TRUST HIM – THE MASTERFUL AND LOVING ARCHITECT. IT IS FOR ME TO SEE OR HEAR WHAT HE IS DOING, RELAX IN MY SOUL, AND FOLLOW HIM.

IF YOU PREFER TO THINK THAT THE LORD “ALLOWS,” THAT’S O.K. JUST REMEMBER THAT ANYTHING SOMEONE ALLOWS HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR IT.

1. JESUS SAID THAT WORLDLY UNBELIEVERS ARE MORE CLEVER THAN ARE CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS [LUKE 16:8]. BECAUSE HE SAID IT, WE KNOW IT IS TRUE. BUT, DOES YOUR EXPERIENCE ALSO BRING YOU INTO AGREEMENT WITH HIM? IF “YES,” IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU OBSERVED THAT TRUTH? DO UNBELIEVERS DO THEIR JOBS BETTER, OR HAVE BETTER PARTIES, OR BETTER FAMILY LIVES? DOES YOUR PERSONAL OBSERVATION SAY HE WAS RIGHT OR WRONG?
2. IF YOU ARE ASKING YOUR CONDITIONING COACH FOR MORE STRENGTH, EXPECT MORE STRENUOUS EXERCISE SESSIONS, PARTICULARLY FOR THOSE PARTICULAR MUSCLES NEEDING STRENGTHENING. SIMPLE, RIGHT? IF YOU HAVE ASKED THE LORD FOR MORE STRENGTH IN YOUR SOUL, EXPECT TRIALS TO INCREASE IN YOUR WEAKER AREAS. ALSO SIMPLE, RIGHT?

THANKFULLY, OUR SOUL’S STRENGTH COACH KNOWS WHERE WE NEED STRENGTHENING, WHETHER WE ARE WEAK SOMEWHERE OR WHETHER WE ARE STRONG BUT NOT STRONG ENOUGH FOR THAT WHICH IS COMING TOMORROW. HE KNOWS, HE PREPARES US, WE ARE READY. STRUGGLES STRENGTHEN US. ONE OF MY SONS SAYS: “THAT WHICH DOESN’T KILL ME, STRENGTHENS ME.” I’M VERY PLEASED TO HAVE A SON WHO KNOWS AND PRACTICES THAT INSIGHT. HE HAS RELIED ON THE TRUTH IN MANY FORMS TO CARRY HIM THROUGH.

1. PAUL WAS NOT RELUCTANT TO TELL CHRISTIANS TO WATCH AND IMITATE HIM. HOWEVER, THOSE INSTRUCTIONS SEEMED TO BE FOR THOSE WHO WERE HAVING DIFFICULTY WATCHING AND IMITATING THE INVISIBLE JESUS ALONG THE NARROW WAY. PAUL DID NOT MIND BEING THE LORD’S EXAMPLE UNTIL THEIR VISION IMPROVED.

LIKEWISE, WE SHOULD BE READY TO OFFER OURSELVES AS EXAMPLES. ARE YOU RELUCTANT? FALSE HUMILITY MAY PREVENT THE OFFERING OF OUR SELVES TO GOD AND MAN. OUR SINFULNESS CAN BE AN OBSTACLE, BUT USUALLY CAN BE OVERCOME BY AN HONEST, TIMELY AND WISELY WORDED CONFESSION.

1. HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THE WORLD CONTINUES TO MOVE TOWARD ANARCHY? RESIDUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF ANARCHY MAY HOLD THE DOWNHILL SLIDE IN CHECK BRIEFLY, UNTIL THE LAST POCKETS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE SUFFICIENTLY OVERCOME – IN AN INDIVIDUAL OR IN A SOCIETY. THEN COMES THE GENERAL DISORDER DUE TO LACK OF GOVERNANCE, AGAIN IN INDIVIDUALS OR SOCIETIES.

SATAN REFUSED TO BE GOVERNED BY GOD. I’LL VENTURE THE THOUGHT THAT HE WAS NOT ENTIRELY BAD MORALLY AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS CONTRARY THOUGHTS, OR EVEN AT THE BEGINNING OF HIS HEAVENLY REBELLION, BUT AS HE GAVE HIMSELF OVER TO SIN HE BECAME ENTIRELY BAD – REBELLIOUS, PRIDEFUL, AND MURDEROUS. HE LEFT HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS CREATOR, FOCUSED ON HIMSELF, AND SET UP HIS OWN KINGDOM.

BEFORE THE LORD GAVE ISRAEL THEIR KINGS, EACH MAN DID WHAT WAS RIGHT [NOT WHAT THEY CONSIDERED “WRONG,” BUT TRULY “RIGHT”] IN THEIR OWN MINDS [JUD. 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25]. THEY HAD NO MAN-HEADSHIP BUT CREATED THEIR OWN GOD-HEADS. NO DOUBT THEY GOT SOME SATISFACTION OUT OF THAT [I DID AND OCCASIONALLY STILL DO], BUT NOT GODLY PEACE, POWER AND PRODUCTIVITY. ISRAEL EVENTUALLY SAW THAT THEIR OPPRESSORS HAD ORDER, STARTING WITH THEIR KINGS. SO, AFTER 400 YEARS OF ANARCHY THEY PUSHED SAMUEL AND JEHOVAH FOR A KING. WITHOUT BEING PENITANT OF THEIR ANARCHY, THERE WAS NO WAY THEY WERE GOING TO GET GOD’S BEST SO, STILL BEING ANARCHNISTS AND “IN CONTROL,” THEY WERE GIVEN THE BEST AVAILABLE – THE EVIL AND INCAPABLE SAUL.

THE TREE OF ANARCHY DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE EVIL AT FIRST, BUT IN SEASON ITS FRUIT SHOWS ITS NATURE [GAL. 5:19-21]. THE CHURCH HAS BEEN COMPLETELY INSTRUCTED, ADEQUATELY EMPOWERED, AND IS BEING/WILL BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS/OUR ANARCHY.

THIS IS A KINGDOM!

1. ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH SAW THEM AND THEIR PURPOSES. IN BATTLE, SOLDIERS CAN BECOME SCATTERED OR FIGHTING GROUPS SEPARATED FROM THEIR COMMANDER. DIVISION AMONG HIS OPPOSITION IS A COMMON TACTIC OF THE ENEMY. THE SOLUTION: A FLAG OR STANDARD,WHICH WOULD ORDINARILY BE USED TO SIMPLY IDENTIFY A GROUP, SUCH AS A GROUP MARCHING IN A PARADE, WOULD BE HELD HIGH DURING THE BATTLE SO THAT EVERYONE COULD SEE WHERE TO GATHER, TO RE-UNITE, TO RE-ESTABLISH ORDER, PROTECTION AND EFFECTIVENESS. THE STANDARD, OR UNIT FLAG, WAS HELD HIGH. THE SOLDIERS RE-GROUPED AND FOUGHT MORE SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY.

THE CHURCH IS SCATTERED. SOME UNITS ARE FORMED BY ONE CONGREGATION. OTHER UNITS ARE ENTIRE DENOMINATIONS. IF THEY ARE NOT PROPERLY EQUIPPED AND ACTIVELY FIGHTING, THEY ARE ALREADY NEUTRALIZED OR DEFEATED.

LOOK AROUND. THE CHURCH IS NOT FIGHTING AS ONE UNIT. THAT CANNOT AND WILL NOT CONTINUE. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID THAT: “IF WE WILL NOT HANG TOGETHER, WE WILL SURELY HANG SEPARATELY.”

THE STANDARD MAY BE ON THE DISTANT HORIZON FOR SOME WHO ARE FAR FROM BEING UNITED IN CHRISTIAN LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP. THE FEELING HAS BEEN: “WE DO NOT NEED THOSE OTHER CHRISTIANS.” THOSE SIMPLY HAVE FURTHER TO COME AS THE LORD RE-GATHERS HIS CHURCH. OTHERS ARE CLOSER TOGETHER AND ARE ALREADY BENEFITING FROM OUR UNITY.

NO, I AM NOT THINKING THAT WE SHOULD ALL FORM ONE NEW OR REFORMED CHURCH. GOD’S GRACE SHOWS BRIGHTLY TO THE WORLD WHEN HIS CHURCH OVERLOOKS ALL OF ITS DIFFERENCES – DIFFERENCES THAT ORDINARILY SEPARATE PEOPLE. THE WORLD KNOWS ABOUT DIVISION, HATE, DIVORCE AND DEFEAT. WHEN THE CHURCH LOVES ONE ANOTHER, WITH OUR OBVIOUS DIFFERENCES SHOWING CLEARLY, WE SHOW FORTH JESUS’ WORDS IN JOHN 17:22-23.

1. AFTER 40 YEARS THE ISRAELITES WERE STILL IN THE WILDERNESS, BUT WERE ABOUT TO CROSS THE JORDAN INTO THE LAND WHICH JEHOVAH HAD PROMISED THEM. MOSES WAS GIVING THEM HIS GOOD-BYE MESSAGE. HE WAS NOT GOING IN WITH THEM. HE, TO WHOM THE LORD HAD GIVEN MUCH, HAD MUCH REQUIRED OF HIM. MOSES HAD FAILED THE “MORE REQUIRED” TEST [NUM. 27:12-14] SO HE WAS NOT TO INHERIT THE BLESSING RESERVED FOR OVERCOMERS.

WHAT WAS A GODLY LEADER TO DO? HE GATHERED THE PEOPLE TOGETHER AND REHEARSED THEIR PAST AND FUTURE HISTORY IN THEIR EARS, INCLUDING GOD’S CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE AND HIS BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE.

LOOK THEN AT DEUTERONOMY 29:14-15. MOSES MADE THE COVENANT AND SPOKE THE OATH ON BEHALF OF 1) THOSE OF THEIR PAST [THE PATRIARCHS, THOSE IN EGYPT, ETC.], 2) THOSE THERE WITH HIM THAT DAY, AND 3) THOSE OF THE CENTURIES INTO THEIR FUTURE [THAT’S US]. THEY AND THE LORD WERE DEALING WITH ISRAEL’S PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE PEOPLE AND TOTAL HISTORY.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF HOW YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR 1) NOT ONLY YOURSELF AND OTHERS IN THE HERE AND NOW, BUT 2) ALSO FOR BEING THE FULFILLMENT OF THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS OF YOUR PAST [PARENTS, CHURCH PATRIARCHS, JESUS, KING DAVID, ABRAHAM, ET. AL.] AND 3) THOSE OF THE FUTURE? MOSES SAID HE WAS MAKING COVENANT WITH ALL 3 GROUPS. THAT’S REAL STUFF.

IN HEBREWS 11:39-40 WE ARE REMINDED OF THAT SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BLESSING. WE ARE TOLD THAT WITHOUT US, THOSE WHO HAD GAINED APPROVAL THROUGH THEIR FAITH DID NOT RECEIVE THE END PRODUCT OF THAT FOR WHICH THEY BELIEVED. APART FROM US, THAT FOR WHICH THEY BELIEVED WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED, LEAVING THEM AS FAILURES OF FAITH – HAVING BELIEVED IN AN INCOMPETENT GOD AND IN THAT WHICH DID NOT HAPPEN. WE [GOD AND US] APPROVED THEIR FAITHFULNESS AND MADE THEM TRIUMPHANT.

I FEEL REALLY GOOD ABOUT HAVING BEEN A PART OF THAT FOR THEM, AND ABOUT NOW LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THOSE OF THE FUTURE.

THE JEWS HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN THAT THEY ARE A PEOPLE WITH A PAST AND A FUTURE, BUT MUCH OF THEIR PRESENT HAS BEEN A TRAGEDY. THE CHURCH ALSO FITS INTO THAT MOLD. MAY THE LORD BLESS OUR BROTHERS, THE JEWS.

1. PSALM 15 IS DELIGHTFUL TO READ SLOWLY FOR PERSONAL EFFECT. LET ME SHARE A FEW OF ITS BLESSINGS, AS ADAPTED FOR ME.

V. 1 -- LORD, WHERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL NOT SPLIT WHEN WE HAVE NOTHING TOGETHER – THE ONES WHO WOULD HAVE STUCK TOGETHER WHEN WE HAD EVERYTHING TOGETHER?

V. 2 – SHOW ME THOSE WHO HAVE INTEGRATED THEIR SPIRITUALITY WITH THEIR HUMANITY. THOSE ARE THE ONES WHOM I WANT TO BE AROUND, BECAUSE THEIR RIGHTOUSNESS WILL INFECT ME. IT SEEMS TO JUST RUB OFF ON EVERYONE. THEY FIND IT SO EASY TO SPEAK THE SIMPLE TRUTH.

V. 3 – I NEVER DO HEAR THEM SAY NEGATIVE THINGS ABOUT OTHERS, SO I KNOW THEY DON’T SAY NEGATIVE THINGS ABOUT ME [ALTHOUGH THEY COULD]. EVEN WHEN THEY CAN GET EVEN WITH THOSE WHO WRONG THEM, THEY DON’T. THEIR FRIENDS ARE REALLY BLESSED.

V. 4 – THEY DON’T GO AROUND WITH PEOPLE OF THE OPPOSITE SORT, BUT I DO SEE THEM BEING HELPFUL TO THEM. THEY ARE REALLY IN SOLID WITH THE BETTER FOLKS. ANOTHER THING THAT I APPRECIATE IS THAT THEY KEEP THEIR WORD, EVEN WHEN IT COSTS THEM MORE THAN THEY THOUGHT IT WOULD.

V. 5 – I NOTICE THAT THEY LOAN TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY WITHOUT CHARGING INTEREST. PUTTING THAT TOGETHER WITH THEIR REFUSAL TO TAKE FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE OF ANYONE, THEY ARE DEFINITELY A DIFFERENT SORT OF PEOPLE. I’LL BET THAT THEY WILL NEVER WOBBLE LOOSE FROM THEIR ABIDING PLACE IN YOU.

1. ARE YOUR MEETINGS ENCUMBERED WITH TOO MUCH TALKING? LEADERSHIP IN MEETINGS IS IMPORTANT, ISN’T IT? EVERY PERSON PRESENT IN THE MEETING IS IMPORTANT. EVERYTHING SAID MAY BE IMPORTANT, BUT NOT EVERYTHING SAID IS PERTINENT. I DON’T INTEND TO TRY TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM FOR US RIGHT HERE, BUT LEADERSHIIP NEEDS TO AVOID OR STOP COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TALK.
2. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD, SUCH AS WERE OFFERED TO JESUS DURING HIS WILDERNESS TEMPTATION, HAVE COME TO INCLUDE MUCH OF THE CHURCH. HE REJECTED THEM ALL, WHETHER THEY WERE COVERED BY A MANTLE LABELED “CHRISTIANITY” OR WERE FRANKLY CARNAL. HOW HAVE YOU HANDLED THAT OFFER?
3. THERE IS A MOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO TAKE BACK THE WORKPLACE “OUT THERE IN THE WORLD.” THE MINISTRY, MINISTERS, FUNCTIONING GIFTS, ETC. [EVERYTHING THAT IS OF THE LORD IN THE CHURCH] ARE TO EXIST AND FUNCTION EVERYWHERE 24/7. WE ARE THE CHURCH. WHEREVER WE ARE, THERE IS THE CHURCH AND ALL THAT WE ARE.

FULL-TIME “NON-PROFESSIONAL” SAINTS, ORDINARILY CALLED “LAITY,” ARE FOUND EVERYWHERE. THEY/WE LACK NOTHING IN REGARDS TO GOD’S CALLING AND ANOINTING. WE SEE THIS HAPPENING NOW IN CORPUS CHRISTI. IN THE PAST YEAR THE LORD HAS GIVEN US COMMITTED CHRISTIANS AS MAYOR, CHIEF OF POLICE, SHERIFF, COUNTY JUDGE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY, NEWSPAPER EDITOR AND SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS. THE LORD IS DOING IT, THE LAY-SAINTS ARE RESPONDING, AND THE CLERGY SAINTS ARE REJOICING.

IT IS NOT AN ENTIRELY SMOOTH OPERATION. ONE PASTOR SHARED TODAY THAT EARLY IN HIS MINISTRY THE YOUTH OF HIS CHURCH WERE ON YOUTH RETREAT WHERE SEVERAL RECEIVED THE LORD AND WERE WATER BAPTIZED. WHEN HE HEARD OF IT, HIS FIRST REACTION WAS OF ANGER. “HOW DARE THEY DO THAT! I AM THE PASTOR!” HE EVENTUALLY REPENTED. BUT THAT SORT OF RESPONSE CAN BE EXPECTED WHEN UNEXPECTED CHANGES OCCUR – IN ANY DISCIPLINE, SUCH AS THE CHURCH, MEDICINE, LAW, EDUCATION, FINANCES, EDUCATION, CIVIL GOVERNANCE, ETC.

BUSINESS MEN AND WOMEN ORDINARILY ARE A SUCCESSFUL BUNCH. THEY COMPETE, INVENT, PERSIST, SOLVE PROBLEMS – ALL OFWHICH SHOW THAT THE LORD IS WITH THEM. THEY ARE ANNOINTED FOR SERVICE, MINISTRY AND SUCCESS JUST AS ARE OUR CIVIL GOVERNMENTS IN THEIR SPECIAL AREA OF MINISTRY [ROM. 13:1-5]. BUSINESS PEOPLE NOT ONLY MAKE THEIR BUSINESSES SUCCESSFUL, BUT THEY MAKE THEIR SOCIETY SUCCESSFUL. THEY ARE MINISTERS OF GOD FOR BLESSINGS UPON SOCIETY, WHICH BECOMES MORE OBVIOUS WHEN RIGHTEOUSNESS PREVAILS IN THAT FIELD OF MINISTRY.

IT IS NOT SURPRISING TO FIND BUSINESS MEN WHO ARE PASTORS TO THEIR EMPLOYEES, OR EVANGELISTS TOTHEM, OR PROPHETS, OR TEACHERS, OR APOSTLES. THOSE SPIRITUAL MINISTERS AND THEIR MINISTRIES DO NOT NEED A RELIGIOUS FACE OR PRESENTATION ON THEM.

IT WILL BE GOOD WHEN THE BUSINESS WORLD BEGINS TO RECOGNIZE THAT ITS CALLING AND ANNOINTING ARE FROM GOD, AND WHEN THE CHURCH RECOGNIZES THAT OF THE BUSINESS WORLD. AS THAT CONSCIOUSNESS BECOMES MORE WIDESPREAD, CORPUS CHRISTI WILL BE TRANSFORMED BY THE MOST SURPRISING HOLY SPIRIT FORM OF REVIVAL THAT I WOULD HAVE IMAGINED.

AMONG OTHERS, LUTHERANS WILL REJOICE WITH LUTHER THAT THE CHURCH HAS COME ALIVE AGAIN TO THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER AND THAT THE JUST ARE ALIVE BY FAITH.

1. I CAN GET INTO TROUBLE WITH SOME OF YOU ON THIS THOUGHT, BUT I’LL DO IT ANYWAY. OUR RELATIONSHIP WILL HELP US WEATHER THE DISTURBANCE. IT HAS TO DO WITH PRAYING MORE OR LESS, AND WHY. THE THOUGHT GOES LIKE THIS:

WE ARE OFFERED AN INTIMACY OF FELLOWSHIP/ABIDING/DISCIPLESHIP WITH THE LORD IN WHICH WE EVENTUALLY DO NOT HAVE TO ASK HIM HIS WILL ON CERTAIN MATTERS AS OFTEN AS WE DID IN THE BEGINNING. FOR AN EX-DRUG ADDICT IT MAY START WITH NOT HAVING TO PRAY ABOUT WHETHER HE COULD TAKE JUST A SLIGHT AMOUNT OF HIS FAVORITE RECREATIONAL DRUG, THEN TO NOT HAVE TO ASK THE LORD IF HE SHOULD TAKE THIS OR THAT JOB, AND THEN TO KNOWING WHETHER OR NOTHEI SHOULD PRAY FOR THE HEALING OF A TIRED, FAITHFUL, DYING 95 YEAR OLD SAINT.

THAT PROGRESSION IS AN INDICATION THAT WE HAVE MOVED ALONG THE NARROW WAY SUFFICIENTLY TO HAVE HAD OUR THINKING PROCESSES MOLDED AND OUR EMOTIONS CONTROLLED ENOUGH TO HAVE A GOD-MOLDED MIND WITH WHICH WE DO NOT HAVE TO FIRST CHECK IN WITH OUR FATHER ON EVERYTHING. COMPARE THAT SCENARIO TO OUR CHILDREN WHO NEED LESS TO CHECK WITH US ON MATTERS AS THEY MATURE.

IT IS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO OURSELVES AND EVIDENCE TO OTHERS THAT WE STAND IN HIS PRESENCE AND HAVE STOOD THERE FOR SOME TIME. IT IS AN INDICATION THAT WE ARE BEGINNING TO HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST [PHIL. 2:5], THAT WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS SINCE THE TIME WE DECIDED TO NOT LIVE BY OUR OWN WILLS IN ORDER TO PLEASE HIM. WE HAVE BECOME RIGHTEOUSLY INDEPENDENT IN OUR SUBMISSION.

COMPARE THIS TO MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES WHEN THEY WERE CORNERED BY THE EGYPTIAN ARMY AT THE RED SEA. MOSES PRAYED FOR GUIDANCE, BUT THE LORD TOLD HIM TO STOP CALLING TO HIM --TO DO WHAT HE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN TO DO WITH WHAT HE HAD AND UNDER THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES. MOSES STOPPED PRAYING AND ACTED. WHAT I HEARD THE LORD SAY TO MOSES IS, “YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHAT I WOULD DO IN THIS SITUATION. I HAVE SUFFICIENTLY CONFORMED YOUR MIND TO MINE [1 COR. 2:16].

WE MAY PRAY LESS AND LESS ABOUT GUIDANCE IN CERTAIN EVENTS AND THINGS, BUT MORE AND MORE ABOUT OURSELVES AND THE LORD.

AND THAT’S NOT THE ONLY EVIDENCE BEING PRESENTED BY OUR LIVING IN HIS PRESENCE. ADD TO HAVING THE MIND OF CHRIST SUCH BLESSINGS TO OTHERS AS OUR OBVIOUS CHARACTER TRAITS OF FREEDOM AND LIBERTY. WHILE WE MAY YET IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS UPON OURSELVES, THOSE SELF-IMPOSITIONS WILL BE FOR THE SAKE OF NOT OFFENDING OTHERS WHO ARE WEAKER, YOUNGER OR LESS KNOWLEDGABLE OF THE LORD AND HIS WILL.

OUR FREEDOM TO DO THAT WHICH CHRISTIAN LEGALISTS WOULD BROADLY PROSCRIBE ALSO ALLOWS US TO RESTRAIN OURSELVES BRIEFLY OR PERMANENTLY [ROM. 14]. IF WE ARE FREE, WE ARE FREE TO DO OR NOT DO, TO BE OR TO NOT BE, TO SPEAK OR TO NOT SPEAK, TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES [AS LIFE STYLE OR PHYSICAL DEATH] OR TO TAKE/RESERVE IT TO OURSELVES.

WHAT I AM SAYING IS THAT WE ARE OFFERED LIVES THAT SHOW AN EASY FLOW OF GOD’S WILL. AFTER ALL, WAS THAT NOT TRUE OF JESUS HIMSELF? IS THAT NOT WHAT HE CALLED US TO AND CONTINUES TO ACTIVELY OFFER US? IF WE CONTINUE WITH HIM, IT CAN COME TO THIS – WALKING IN THE SPIRIT BECOMES THE USE OF COMMON SENSE.

1. COMPASSION OF SOUL, MONEY, FOOD, ETC. FOR THE POOR AND OTHERWAYS NEEDY IS MANDATED IN THE CHURCH. THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN THE BELIEVER COMPELLS BENEVOLENT ACTION ON BEHALF OF THE POOR. YET WE SEEM TO NOT NOTICE THE COUNTERPRODUCTIVITY OF MANY OF OUR POLITICAL EFFORTS AIMED AT PRODUCING “SOCIAL JUSTICE.” OVER AND OVER, OUR LEGISLATORS PASS LAWS WHICH, WHEN PUT INTO ACTION, CAUSE WORSE POVERTY OR OTHER ILL-EFFECTS WHICH ARE IGNORED OR NOT UNDERSTOOD.

WISE, LOVING PARENTS KNOW THAT NOTHING IS MORE DESTRUCTIVE OF GOOD CHARACTER IN THEIR CHILDREN THAN THE FORCED TAKING OF ONE CHILD’S EARNED MONEY OR PROPERTY AND GIVING IT TO ANOTHER CHILD, ESPECIALLY IF THE RECIPIENT CHILD HAD UNWISELY SPENT HIS OWN MONEY OR WASTED HIS OWN PROPERTY. I SUSPECT THAT POLITICIANS WHO UNWISELY PRACTICE THOSE POLITICS WOULD NEVER DO THE SAME AT HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

THERE IS SOMETHING SHOWING IN THIS RESPECT IN THE INADEQUATELY SPIRITUALIZED HUMAN SOUL THAT DOES NOT BELIEVE IN CHASTISEMENTS [UNDESERVED BLESSINGS, YES], INEQUALITIES [FORCED EQUALITIES, YES], OR EARNED OWNERSHIP OF PERSONAL PROPERTY [FORCIBLE TAKING FROM OTHERS, YES]. THERE IS A MISAPPLICATION OF THE BIBLICAL MANDATE WHICH WAS NEVER MEANT TO INCLUDE FORCED GIVING TO THE NEEDY.

1. IT HAS LONG BEEN A FOUNDATION OF PROFESSIONALISM THAT EACH ONE [PHYSICIAN, TEACHER, LAWYER, DENTIST, NURSE, PHARMACIST, ETC.] HOLD TO TECHNICAL, MORAL AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOR NO MATTER THE PRESSURES TO DO OTHERWISE.

THERE IS A DEVELOPING VIEW, THAT PROFESSIONALISM REQUIRES ONE TO CONCEDE TECHNICAL, MORAL AND ETHICAL AUTHORITY TO THE CIVIL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS. ACTUALLY, THIS VIEW HAS BEEN DEVELOPING FOR 40 OR 50 YEARS, BEGINNING WITH THE ONSET OF GOVERNMENTAL HEALTH CARE. AFTER THE SUPREME COURT DECIDED THAT WHATEVER THE GOVERNMENT SUBSIDISES IT CONTROLS, THE GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO DO EXACTLY THAT – IN HOUSING, COLLEGE EDUCATION, MEDICAL CARE, CHOICE OF MEDICATIONS, ETC. THE LIST HAS ENLARGED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

THE CONCEDING OF AUTHORITY IN ANY FORM IS A SERIOUS ACT [WIFE TO HUSBAND, SOLDIER TO MILITARY, ETC.]. FOR CHRISTIANS, IF THEY HAVE CONDEDED THEIR LIFE-DECISIONS TO THE LORD, THERE ARE NOW MULTIPLE DAILY VIOLATIONS OF EITHER THE LAW OF MAN OR THE LAW OF GOD. AS A PRACTICING PHYSICIAN I VIOLATED THE LAW OF MAN SEVERAL TIMES DAILY IN THE BEST INTEREST OF MY PATIENTS.

SO, IT IS NOT ONLY WHETHER I SURRENDER MY RIGHTS TO THE LORD AND TO RIGHTEOUS AUTHORITY, BUT NOW TO MULTIPLE UNRIGHTEOUS CIVIL AND LEGAL AUTHORITIES.

THE PLOT THICKENS AND OUR TIME SHORTENS. DON’T WAVER.

1. THERE IS A LITTLE FOOD-FOR-THOUGHT PROCESS THAT SHOWS CONSIDERABLE INSIGHT INTO THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN. IT GOES LIKE THIS: “MEN ARE LIKE WAFFLES; THEY THINK IN COMPARTMENTS AND GO DOWN EASIER AFTER A BUTTERING AND SWEETENING PROCESS. WOMEN ARE LIKE SPAGHETTE; THEY ARE SOFT, THINK IN TANGLES BUT GO TOO EASILY IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.” THANK GOD FOR WOMEN!
2. WHEN YOU, OR A GROUP, GET OPEN AND HONEST AND BEGIN DEALING WITH BEDROCK TRUTH, VERBALIZING CONCLUSIONS ARE GOOD BUT NOT NECESSARY. THE EXPOSED TRUTH WILL WORK AGAINST ITS SWORN ENEMY IN ANY OF HIS FORMS – DECEPTION, SPIN, IGNORANCE, LIES, SIN, UNBELIEF, ETC.
3. OUR NEW MAYOR HAS HAD A LONG-STANDING PERSONAL CREED. WHEN HE TOOK OFFICE, IT BECAME CORPUS CHRISTI’S CREED, INFORMALLY. THIS IS IT:
4. I PROMISE TO BE A PERSON OF INTEGRITY,
5. TO HONOR THOSE I LIVE WITH, WORK ALONGSIDE, AND RESIDE BY.
6. I PROMISE TO CARE FOR MY COMMUNITY, TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR OUR LEADERS, TO EXEMPLIFY MY BELIEFS BY THE WAY I LIVE, THE WORDS I SPEAK AND THE ATTITUDES I DISPLAY.
7. I PROMISE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN CORPUS CHISTI BY SUPPORTING THOSE MAKING A DIFERENCE.
8. I WILL LOVE MORE, PRAY MORE, GIVE MORE, FORGIVE MORE, DREAM MORE, AND BE MORE FOR MY FAMILY, MY COMMUNITY, MY COUNTRY AND MY GOD.
9. I WILL HONOR MY RIGHTS BY LIVING OUT MY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CORPUS CHRISTI.
10. FOR THIS IS MY CITIZEN’S CREED.
11. READ DANIEL 2:37-38. DID YOU EVER THINK THAT THE LORD WOULD EVER SAY SUCH THINGS ABOUT ANYONE OTHER THAN JESUS? KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR WAS GOD’S MAN, SERVING JEHOVAH, BEING GOD’S RESTRAINED HAND OF CHASTISEMENT UPON GOD’S PEOPLE, ETC.

IF YOU DON’T KNOW KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN AN ENTIRELY POSITIVE WAY [EXCEPT FOR HIS BRIEF SLIP INTO PRIDE, GOD’S CHASTISEMENT OF WHICH REVEALED GOD’S FATHERLY LOVE FOR HIM] CALL ME FOR A 30 MINUTE BIBLE LESSON. MY HOME PHONE NUMBER IS 361-334-5222. KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR IS ONE OF THE MOST GOD-EXALTED PERSONS IN SCRIPTURE.

1. SOMEONE WROTE A BOOK, IN WHICH HE SAID SOMETHING LIKE: “JESUS, I LIKE YOU; BUT PLEASE DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR FOLLOWERS.” JUST WHOM MIGHT HE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT? <[:=)
2. I AM TOLD THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS ONCE THAT WE NEED TO BE BORN AGAIN, AND 97 TIMES TO FOLLOW ME/HIM. THAT MAKES SENSE. I HAVE LONG BELIEVED AND EXPERIENCED THAT THE PROCESS AND LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP ATTRACTS FOR REBIRTH THOSE WHO ARE UNBELIEVERS.
3. I’M NOT SURE THAT I GET ALL THAT I SHOULD FROM MY LIFE’S EXPERIENCES. WORRY, FOR EXAMPLE, STILL LINGERS OR AT LEAST I HAVE NOT COMPLETELY LEARNED THAT IT IS UNFRUITFUL, COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, SIN, ETC. I WOULD LIKE FOR PESKY THOUGHTS AND OUTRIGHT TEMPTATION TO COME WITH A WARNING LABEL AND AN ARRANGED APPOINTMENT – SO I WOULD BE READY AND FULLY DRESSED IN BATTLE GEAR.

I HAVE KNOWN FOR YEARS THAT OUR SUDDEN ENCOUNTERS AND RESPONSES SHOW US OUR BASELINE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THAT OUR NON-SUDDEN ENCOUNTERS AND PREPARED RESPONSES SHOW US WHERE WE WANT TO BE. EVEN THOSE WELL-PREPARED RESPONSES MAY NOT SHOW US WHERE WE SHOULD BE. THEY ARE LACED WITH ATTITUDES, FEELINGS, INCOMPLETE KNOWLEDGE AND OTHER THINGS OF OUR SOULS THAT CAN BE AT HIGH VARIANCE WITH THE TRUTH IN LOVE.

1. I WAS THINKING ABOUT THE OUTSTANDING POINTS USED TO REVEAL AND PREACH ABOUT JESUS, AND HOW CENTRAL THEY MAY BE IN YOUR AREA. I BOILED THEM DOWN TO REPENTANCE, PURITY AND POWER. REPENTANCE REJECTS OUR SINFUL AND NON-PRODUCTIVE OLD SELVES, PURITY EMBRACES THE CHARACTER AND HABITS OF JESUS, AND IN OUR OTHERWISE HELPLESSNESS THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS US. SO, HOW GOES THE REVELATION, FORMATION, AND MINISTRY OF JESUS IN YOUR CHURCHES?
2. FINANCIAL HARD TIMES ARE WITH US. MORE THAN THE ORDINARY NUMER OF BUSINESSES ARE FAILING. THAT INCLUDES BUSINESSES OWNED BY CHRISTIANS. THE POINT I’M LEADING TO IS THAT BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO CHRISTIAN BUSINESSMEN, EVEN THOSE WHO ARE THE MORE RIGHTEOUS AND WHO HAVE A GENUINE TRUST/FAITH IN THE LORD. THAT IS VERY UNFORTUNATE.

FAITH DOES NO GOOD [AS FAR AS BUSINESS RESULTS ARE CONCERNED] IF PROPER DECISIONS AND HARD WORK DO NOT ACCOMPANY IT [JAM. 2:17]. ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY HIS FAITH [AS ARE WE], BUT GOD’S COVENANT OF EARTH-RESULTS WAS EFFECTED THROUGH ABRAHAM’S FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS [GEN. 15:1-6; 17:1-2; 9:10]. IF RIGHTEOUS AND WISE ACTIONS DID NOT FOLLOW, ABRAHAM WOULD HAVE FAILED IN HIS EARTHLY CALLING. THAT WHICH HE BELIEVED THE LORD FOR WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED. SO IT IS WITH US.

1. UNTIL THE HOLY SPIRIT FALLS UPON/FILLS US, ANY VISION GIVEN US BY THE HOLY SPIRIT IS UNOBTAINABLE. WE KNOW THAT WE AND OTHERS SHOULD HAVE A ZEAL FOR THE LORD AND HIS WORK, BUT THOSE FLOW FROM TWO THINGS: 1) AN ACT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR SOULS [WHICH CAN BE BROUGHT FORTH IN HUMBLE PRAYER BUT CANNOT BE FAKED OR FORCED], AND 2) OUR RESPONSES TO HIM, WHICH WILL THEN BE UNFORCED, AND “NATURAL.” SEE ACTS 4:31, WHERE THOSE SAINTS ALREADY HAD THE HOLY SPIRIT , BUT NEEDED REFILLING.
2. DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS ARE TO BE CAREFULLY MONITORED. IT IS FINE TO TALK ABOUT THEM AMONG SELECTED COMPANY – MEANING THOSE WHO CAN HANDLE THEM WITHOUT BREAKING FELLOWSHIP OR MAKING SOMETHING EVEN MORE DOUBTFUL OF THEM. SEE ROMANS 14:1.

AS I TOLD A DEAR BROTHER, A PROBLEM WITH DOUBTFUL DISPUTATIONS IS THAT WHEN YOU PUT TWO OR MORE TOGETHER, PERHAPS TRYING TO MAKE A POINT OR A PREMISE OR LAY A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION, ALL YOU HAVE IS A HOUSE OF CARDS.

THE LORD IS WITH YOU.