THOUGHTS OF MAY, 2017

1. We sometimes get to make exciting choices like, would you rather sit at the feet of a Bible teacher who has the Bible memorized and can teach you the Bible from A to Z, but has no spiritual insight, or would you rather sit at the feet of an ill-informed saint who has been with and seen Jesus and has a real testimony of the living God? That’s Nicodemus [John 3:1-21] or the ex-blind beggar [John 9:1-41]. Nicodemus was a Bible teacher who was well-educated in the words of God but was blind to the presence and life in those words, and to the presence of the Living Word as they talked together. The ex-blind beggar was an ignorant man who had something to say. He had encountered the Living Word and was eager to share his testimony.

Choose Life.

1. When I was born again, my flesh was condemned and nailed to the cross. It died there. From that time onward it has not been me in this body; it has been Jesus Christ who lives in me.

That is the absolute truth. As long as I believed the truth [because the truth is effective only by active faith] I have been able to show forth Christ. When I tried to be like Jesus, at best I was briefly successful – about the same as when I did not trust or try at all. But, when I would remember that “it is no longer me but Christ Jesus who lives in me, that the life I now live in this flesh I live by [actively applying] faith in the Son of God,” it became Jesus who was alive instead of me. I found that I cannot do it, but that He can and will when I trust Him to do it. He is the one who was tempted in every way but did not sin, not me. He is the one who is over all things, not me. I am relieved of being God; especially of being my god.

Jesus is being reproduced in my character, not by my trying to be like Him, but by my faith in His being my righteousness, my redemption, my sanctification, my salvation, and my wisdom – now! He is alive in me so therefore He can live through me, according to my active faith in Him to do it.

Stop striving; actively trust Him [that’s a form of fellowship and prayer]. Watch His results.

1. Have you noticed that the Lord has the ability to illuminate our minds and to excite our wills? We don’t have to be prophets for Him to do that. We are His children. It is His nature to stir the souls of His family members. He wants us to see and hear things that others do not and many cannot. We are eternal creatures now and forever. Listen, and think with Him.
2. When I was accepted into medical school [age 26, married, two small children, no money, no federal loans] I realized that I had squeezed in through a very tight entrance process. I was one of the last applicants accepted in that year’s class to the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. Many had applied but few had been chosen – only one-fourth of the college graduate pre-medical applicants were accepted to medical schools in those years, even though all applicants had successfully completed four years of college premedical studies.

And, I realized that I had also chosen a difficult and narrow path, but knew that it would be life-giving to me and to others. The sacrifices were many, and those were the years before I was apprehended by the Lord and invited to walk with Him.

That natural process of my life is a picture of our lives in the Lord. Jesus said, “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

During the five years between college and medical school I had entered into life through the wide gate and begun walking the wide way that leads to destruction. It was not a lonely walk because there were many others who had entered the same wide gate and were eager to walk the wide way with me. Destruction littered the way. I shudder when I reflect on those years.

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.” You recognized Matthew 7:13-14.

Stay on course until the whistle blows and your walk is over. Make your choices based on Life.

1. The poor will always be with us. That’s for sure, but it does not mean that we are to ignore poor individuals or the poverty problem. Likewise, inequality will always be with us, but we are not to ignore unequal individuals or the inequality problem. It is not surprising to you that in our desire to “solve” those and other basic soul and social problems we create more and perhaps greater problems, while worsening the situations of the poor and unequal ones.

For example, our governmental programs for the poor have ways of sinking the poor further into poverty, of impoverishing the general population, and of estranging the classes. The special programs designed to equalize the unequal have the same results; they flatten down everyone into the same dull mediocrity and divide society. Laws cannot produce prosperity and cannot produce equality. We can have prosperity and equality only in a free and virtuous society.

We need laws. Laws are good, but laws do not produce righteousness; they can punish unrighteousness but cannot produce righteousness. When laws try to correct social problems they commonly work backward, into those pesky and destructive things called “unintended consequences.” When the kingdom of God moves into a society, solutions are created that have “intended consequences.”

I have noticed that the more the church defers to civil government for solutions to our social problems [that will always be with us], the more problems we cause. The Lord has solutions that will do good things for us, but will not solve our social problems. Righteousness, love, and sacrifice will do a great job, the job He designs them/us to do, but will not produce the perfection that Jesus will produce in His coming millennial kingdom on earth when He returns. But at this time, we have in our hands the heavenly tools provided for partial answers in this earthly age.

1. Europe is still rejecting itself. That’s called “suicide.” When Europe dropped the idea of being Christian, it also had to drop the grounds on which it had become Christian. It wanted the socio-political structure that Christianity had built but rejected biblical teachings and purposes. It rejected the gospel of Jesus Christ. They seemed to think that the culture they liked would persist without its breath [Life].

Europe did not need the mass immigration of Muslims to put itself to death; its death rattle was already audible. It had lost its belief, traditions, and legitimacy, so the Muslim invasion is simply filling a vacuum and providing a new direction.

1. Choosing to walk the way of the cross is difficult, but only on our flesh. When we say “How hard it is to live as Christ!” we are reporting on the active resistance of our flesh. That difficulty persists only until we recognize that in me [that is, in my flesh], nothing good dwells. Paul had the insight to know that about himself – Rom. 8:18.

Whenever we see ourselves in the light of God, making our decision to take up our cross daily and follow Jesus becomes much easier. Then we can ask ourselves, “Shall I continue this walk in my flesh or will I lay down my self so Jesus’ life in me can flow outward?” and come closer to the correct answer.

That painful confrontation must be experienced in every area of our carnal lives. And, yes, every area of our soul has some carnality.

1. All wives know that one of the inborn errors of masculinity is that he will not consult a roadmap when he gets lost. “The destination is just over the hill or around the corner,” he says. The same goes for putting objects together when bought in pieces; men tend to not start with the manufacturers’ directions. The wise wife will keep her peace and await his success or acknowledged defeat. That’s when he is ready to do it the right way.

A similar situation occurs when we are seeking ways to handle personal relations and other approaches to life. The basics and the details are readily at hand in the Bible. When we are ready to set aside our preconceptions, seek the Way, and get on the high way, the goal is in sight.

1. Being a servant to a perfect person sounds great, no matter what kind of work we perform. But, being a son of that perfect person sounds better. All of those Old Testament saints were servants: Moses [Josh. 1:1, 2, 7], Joshua [Josh. 24:29], and Elijah [1 Kings 18:36], to name a few. Jesus, God’s Son, came to serve, but He served as a son. That’s our position, also. As believers in Jesus Christ we are positioned as sons, to serve. And, the least of us sons is greater than the greatest of God’s servants, including Moses, Joshua and Elijah – Matt. 11:11. Why? Because relationship is more important than service, especially blood relationships.

With our eternal sonship settled and “nailed down,” and while delighting in our ongoing intimate fellowship with the Lord, we can look at our calling as sons of God. As spiritual people we have spiritual gifts, which may or may not be along the lines of our natural lives and work. Called to be a doctor, much of my giftedness was in the field of medical care, such as medical and spiritual healings, and natural and spiritually insightful leadership and teaching in the medical field. But some of my/our spiritual gifts function outside of the naturalness of our natural lives and work, such as non-medical travel to testify of the living Christ in and among us to religious and political leaders in other nations.

In any case, the question should arise, “What are we doing with our gifts, talents, responsibilities and other of the Spirit’s deposits within us?” We have spiritual gifts that need not be neglected [1 Tim. 4:14] but, to the contrary, need to be perfected [Rom. 12:6-8; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; 2 Pet. 1:5-7]. We are being and will be held accountable for how we did with everything the Lord has given us [made us responsible for], as in Matthew 18:23-35 and 25:14-30.

We are a fulfilled people. He has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness. Let’s finish our race in grand style. It will be good to stand before Jesus on that day and hear Him say, “Well done.” Oh, yes; sinless perfection is beyond our reach. We have already failed in that, without trying, but we can show up at His judgment seat with our very messy record forgiven and cleansed before we get there – 1 John 1:9. You must take care of that yourself – you and the Lord. Your victory may not be apparent to others who know you well, or to those strangers who saw you on that particularly bad occasion, but your past sinful nature and the sins themselves can be completely done away with now before you stand there alone and naked before the Lord. You may not look very perfect right now, but neither did Jesus. He looked like an utter failure, too. So, get cleaned up and join Him in the winners’ circle.

1. Some of you have never been to Texas. That is an oversight that should be corrected as soon as possible. At our home the light is on for you. In the meantime, I’ll list a few things that you can expect to find here: 1) In a store, if you are looking for something but can’t fine it, expect another shopper to offer you assistance. 2) If someone calls on your phone, and it is a wrong number, expect to have an enjoyable conversation and a new friend before hanging up. 3) Here we measure our distances in hours. 4) If the speed limit is 55 mph, and you are going 70, stay in the slow lane.
2. Since the days of Adam, the process of attaining righteousness before God was made variable, except for the always-necessity of faith. Adam knew the Lord Himself so gained much from their relationship, but then he found himself in a bad place – he who knew the grace that flowed from walking with the Lord now had to live by knowing and doing right, and by knowing and not doing wrong. I suspect that that put him in a quandary. He had to establish himself on a different truth, or his life would become more of a disaster than it already was. Yes, Adam was transformed downward, dumbed down spiritually by the Lord, but he still had his memory.

So, when Adam fell from grace, he had to change his spiritual lifestyle from righteousness to unrighteousness. For us, when we fell into grace we had to change our spiritual lifestyle from unrighteousness to righteousness. I am aware of the Lord’s sovereign working in Adam’s and our situations, but we were and are also involved [which I tend to minimize while magnifying His role.] Adam, as do we, had to pass along the history, information and methods to his descendants, all of whom have their own ideas about life and God. You know of that from your own life and from your teenagers.

The one stable aid for knowing of a Creator and His nature was that all of creation showed the reality of a Creator and of His nature – Rom. 1. That aspect of the revelation of God is still with us, and is applicable even to those who have never heard the gospel. The Lord provided additional information over the centuries through men like Abraham and Moses. They kept the revelations that were increasingly opening to them, plus faith, thus pleasing God. It was, “know what is available to you, do right, and trust God.”

It is evident that they had lots of God’s grace but they did not have Christ within them, our redeemer, our brother, our righteousness, our sanctification, our revelation, our justification. Now, believers, by reckoning, settling it, accounting it as done and as livable now [but only by faith that it is already done within us by Christ, enabling us now to live it out], are exhibiting Jesus to a world that is either fighting against the Lord or trying to develop righteousness by self-effort.

What a relief it is to be mostly out of that trap.

1. Question: Was Jesus righteous because He did righteous things? Answer: No; He did righteous things because He was righteous. Same question redirected: Christian, are you righteous because you do righteous things? Answer: No; you do righteous things because you are righteous. The manifestation or “working outward” of our righteousness happens because within us we are alive only by God’s righteous spirit, and we know that therefore the Lord accounts us as righteous, and that therefore we are now righteous, and so we believe the truth [that we are the righteousness of God], and so the Lord is pleased that we believe Him, and so He processes our righteousness into actions, and so His righteousness flows out of His being in us, and so our righteousness becomes obvious externally to others, and so others consider us righteous.
2. In Babylon, Daniel’s three friends and co-slaves refused to worship the king’s 90-foot tall golden statue – Dan. 3. Thus, the king ordered them thrown into the fiery furnace. You know the story. By God’s grace they were living Romans 8:28 long before it was written by Paul: “The Lord turns all things to good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.” In their case, the good was that the fire did not hurt them, and that the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ met them there, really – verse 25. The last we know of their lives is that as long as they lived they prospered – verse 30.

Question: Do you think that, for the remainder of their lives, they were willing to go through the fire again, even many times? I easily suppose the answer is, “Definitely, yes.” And I suppose that they did go through other types of fiery trials, many times. They had found grace in their trial. Better put, they had found Grace in their trial, because Grace was a man – Jesus Christ. Grace by faith produced an appointment with the Lord.

Paul found that same Grace, and testified to it/Him in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 when he wrote: “.. ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” [There Paul quoted the Lord – ed.] Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”

We don’t have record of further trials of the three Israeli slaves, but we do of Paul’s. His trials persisted as long as he had life, and he prospered in each of them. He met Grace in each of them. Another name for Jesus Christ is “Victory,” so he met Victory in each of them.

The Lord’s engraved invitations to His Victory celebration have been mailed out, engraved on the palms of His hands.

1. God’s instructions to His people are that the needy who will not work [but who are able to work – ed.] are not to be fed. That’s in Leviticus 19:9-10 and 2 Thessalonians 3:10. Our disobedience to those instructions has led us to 1) feeding the needy who can but will not work [a modern-age problem] and 2) not feeding the needy who cannot work [a problem of the ages]. Over centuries our many societies have shown the results of trying to improve God’s ways and the results of resisting His ways. To use a stock market term, a correction is coming.
2. Spiritually, the effect of rebellion in a person or family or church or society or world is the same as the effect of witchcraft, 1 Samuel 15:23, and the result of both is death. Their Old Testament punishment was physical death, and their New Testament punishment is spiritual death. Rebellion is the willful submission, the giving of oneself over, to evil spiritual forces, and witchcraft is the willful worship of those evil spiritual forces. Rebellion and witchcraft should not be treated lightly, in view of those consequences and because they spread to others like measles.

Civil disobedience has its many faces: peacefulness, quiet sit-ins, activism, protests, mob violence, revolts, mutiny, and civil war. The increase of civil disobedience in our time has been incubating for 50 years, even 90 years. It has gradually increased in its intensity and frequency. Believers have been warned about it being one of the harbingers of the end times. No, rebellion is not unique to our lifetime, but it is intensifying and becoming a much more common and “acceptable” response to not having one’s way.

This Thought does not have a political, national, or religious focus. It has a spiritual focus that applies to every area of creation, from humans outward. The spirit of rebellion is being unleashed. That can happen only when the spirit of unity, harmony, and peace [the Holy Spirit] is being and finally will be fully removed. The church has long played its role on both sides – unity and disunity, harmony and rebellion – not a good role model for its ambient societies. Now, when the Holy Spirit is slowly (?) being removed in small and large measures, the fruit of our disharmony is showing around us. It is no longer acceptable that the churches [individuals and denominations] simply agree to disagree so we can get along at arm’s length. Without deliberate, practical, tangible, sacrificial, reaching out, pursuant love in the church [starting with “me”] we will continue seeing our world come apart.

I want to share part of an article with you, written by Daniel Greenfield in USA Politics. It is definitely a political article and speaks of the problem of rebellion in American politics. If you can down-read the political and can up-read the spiritual, you have healthy discernment. Here it is:

“Our civil war is very different than the last one. There are no cannons or cavalry charges. The Left doesn’t want to secede. It wants to rule. Political conflicts become civil wars when one side refuses to accept the existing authority. The Left has rejected all forms of authority that it doesn’t control.

“The Left has rejected the outcome of the last two Presidential elections won by Republicans. It has rejected the judicial authority of the Supreme Court when its decisions don’t accord with its agenda. It rejects the legislative authority of Congress when it is not dominated by the Left.

“It rejected the Constitution so long ago that it hardly bears mentioning. … There is no form of legal authority that the Left accepts as a permanent institution. It only utilizes forms of authority selectively when it controls them. But when government officials refuse the orders of the duly elected government because their allegiance is to an ideology whose agenda is in conflict with the President and Congress, that’s not activism, protest, politics or civil disobedience; it’s treason.”

Greenfield closes with the statement: “That’s why compromise has become impossible.” But this Thought is not about compromise, but about the necessity of standing boldly and publicly for the truth, while living and proclaiming covenantal unity with errant church brothers. The time for “come out from among them” [Is. 52:11; 2 Cor. 6:17; Rev. 18:4] may come during our lifetime, but it will come in God’s time, not in our all-to-common times. Those who are wayward shepherds are in trouble with the Lord, and our rebellion does not help. We should be open and free in our disagreements, with equal and stronger commitment to unity and order. That’s not easy on the flesh. It costs us like it cost Jesus.

1. Habits and character are developed by us, by God’s grace, but they are not gifts of God. They come by the way of our heritage, upbringing, choice of friends, and personal attentiveness. That is part of what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12-13 where he told us to “work” on it so that the character of Christ’s Spirit within us will show outwardly. Peter added self-responsibility to the spiritual growth process [2 Pet. 1:5-11] as he told us to keep adding one quality character after another so we will not be unfruitful. It has been said that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do. That has truth.
2. Yes, as strange as it may sound to us Cold War veterans, a Russian blogger has been convicted of inciting religious hatred for playing “Pokemon Go” in a church in Russia. It’s all over the web. He was given a two-year prison sentence, which was then changed to a suspended sentence. There are various things to make of it; perhaps some are right.

First, the report may not be true, but it appears to be true. Second, Russia has come a long way from its atheist state years. It now has laws that protect religious liberty and protect religions from offensive descriptions, as this man found. Putin has been reported to be a Christian, with a strong overlay of carnal patriotism and Russian paranoia. Most Russians claim to be Christians, mostly Russian Orthodox, and mostly nonobservant. Laws prohibit many types of sexual immorality, ban immoral theater and exhibits, and efforts are being made to end state funding for abortion.

All over the world there appears to be a quiet, rising tide of the Holy Spirit’s workings. It makes almost no waves, yet. But it is here. I have heard of no newspapers or T-V reports on the incoming tide, but personal observation, word of “mouth,” and ministry reports continue to report the fruitfulness of current efforts, and of the Lord’s personal actions.

There are some Christian groups that are loaded with religion so appear to be far away from the gospel course. There are believers among them, and they are effective in certain areas; but there is also much error. When the Lord’s time comes for the call of Revelation 18:4, those who have ears will respond.

It may also be noticed that where the Lord begins a work, the devil comes with his deceptions. So, let’s not throw out early Holy Spirit possibilities along with the enemy’s deceptions. Watch and pray for Russia, where there is much deadwood. Little sparks in dry places start roaring fires.

1. Every kingdom has a king, whether it is an ancient, current or future kingdom. The two basic kingdoms are the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. They are described as kingdoms of Light and of darkness. Internationally speaking, each nation is a kingdom, and each is ruled by a king, even if their offices are not labeled “king.”

Someone or some group is sovereign. That’s what make him/them kings. We may have missed knowing it, but in America our citizens are sovereign; we are America’s king. That was deliberately set up by our founders, and it is true today. There have been powers, foreign and national, spiritual and natural, good and bad who have tested the sovereignty of the people, and have influenced us, but so far the citizens are still king.

When a king has good advisors, and he listens to them, his kingdom flourishes. When he has bad advisors, and he listens to his bad advisors, his kingdom flounders. So, who are the advisors to the king [citizens] in America? Our advisors [shepherds] are our pastors. They are part of the citizenship and their function is to advise according to the kingdom of Light.

1. In John 2:23-25 Jesus was in Jerusalem. He was preaching the good news and doing miracles, that which was His task. On the basis of His words and works many believed that He was the prophesied one to come, their Messiah. Beyond that they had sparse knowledge of what His being their Messiah meant because not much was given to them to know, that is, compared to the knowledge revealed on the day of Pentecost or to us in the well-informed years of the church. But they believed He was the prophet who was to take Moses place, and as the one who was spoken about by other prophets. They were ready to put Him forward as the Messiah, and to start the long-awaited kingdom.

But Jesus did not allow it. His course to kingship was different. He knew that anyone who made Him their king could also unmake Him as their king, such as by fear and abandonment, that being the nature of humanity. He already knew He was their king and He did not need anyone to say He was or to “make” Him such. He knew who He was. In the same way, we need to know who we are in the Lord, and be settled into it, not needing anyone’s promotion in order to be and do that which we are in the Lord.

And in the long run, neither the Jews nor the Gentiles will ever make Jesus King. We of the church do not make Him our king. He is already King, and by His grace we have fallen into His hands. The church simply acknowledges Him as our King, or does not when we do not submit to Him. When He comes to the earth to set up His kingdom it will not be because humanity finally makes Him king and finally installs Him on His throne. It will all be done on God’s schedule, totally by Him, and despite our resistance. Humanity, including the Jews, will be begging Him to come, not installing Him by majority vote or power of man. We will be asking the One who is already king to, “Come and take over, please. Thank You. Hallelujah.”

1. Back to the kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of Satan. That kingdom can be broken down into several of its parts: Political, social, economic, cultural, and probably more of that sort. But we can even extend that list to family, medical, and religious – any grouping of the world’s parts that stem from or migrates to human nature and takes to itself its own autonomy. That means it has taken to itself the determination of right and wrong, has established its own order, and maintains its own common good. That’s darkness, of which there are all shades of grey, from just a little cloudy to total darkness.

In contrast, the Lord’s kingdom has a different view of society and its parts. We humans were created for freedom so we could function with God and man in the bond of love. We all are treated with dignity because each of us was created in the image of God. Even when the death penalty is imposed, the condemned is treated with dignity.

1. If you were to give a commencement address, among the following which one would you lean on for supportive testimony of that which you have to say from your life experience: Adam [a failure, then dependence on God’s grace for gradual redemption], Noah [out of culture’s mainstream, but justified by God], Abraham [heard and obeyed God, but never received the promises], Moses [gross failure, then powerful leader], Solomon [started big, then ran out of gas], Jeremiah [served God faithfully without much earthly reward], or Jonah [big man for God, but on Jonah’s terms]?
2. Will you work and do your best for money or for love? If you tell yourself money, you yet need to experience love. If you tell yourself love, you are already on God’s payroll.
3. Do we have rights in the kingdom of God? How might we properly exercise them? John 1:12 says as many as received Jesus have been given the right/power/privilege to become sons [Gr. “teknon,” to be born into, babes] of God. Because we are the chosen of God, because of the grace of our basic faith in Jesus, we have our first right – to be born again, to become a member of God’s family, to be able to truthfully say that Father God is our Abba [Daddy] Father.

We are given some responsibility for growth once we have been born into the Family. That comes about by our desiring and learning to be led by the Holy Spirit. “For all who are being led [regularly – ed.] by the Spirit of God, these are the son of God [Gr. “suios,” mature, grown up sons] – Rom. 8:14. We are not told that growing up [sanctification] is a right. Instead it is an avenue opened to those who take up their crosses daily and follow Jesus. Let’s call that an earned privilege, not a right.

Back to our rights as sons of the Lord God All-Mighty Abba. What are they? What do we do with them? We have the right to come boldly before the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need [obedience and rest in our trials] – Heb. 4:16. That is an important right, with unbelievable payoff.

How about our rights in the other direction, toward the world, its kingdom and all that it offers, including much offered by the Lord? We have the right to waive our rights – Gen. 13:8-12. Abraham had the right of first choice. His nephew, Lot, would have been expected to take the second half. But Abraham gave Lot the first choice between two vastly different choices – the river valley with its grass and cities, or the hills and rocks. Why did Abraham do that? My answer: Abraham knew that he could not lose, no matter which half Lot chose. That principle stands forever; we cannot lose when we give away the first choice [when it is not a moral issue].

Another right: The right to be silent. That is written into our American Constitution, and into the Kingdom of God Constitution. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was led away silent to the slaughter, not defending Himself or proclaiming His rights during that illegal trial. In the same way, we are not to “stand on our rights.” Rights are determined when we relate to others “in law.” Why would we want to place ourselves under the law? The Lord is our judge and He is constantly at hand. Let Him make the choice. The best choice for us is the one we allow Him to make.

And we have the right to defend [justify] ourselves, although there is a Heavenly Justifier other than ourselves – Rom 3:21-31. Even when standing before humans, it is best to not justify ourselves. Paul advised us to reject self-justification even in the courts of this world – 1 Cor. 6:1-7. That instruction may have been only for Christian-to-Christian legal problems. Like we can mis-live life by concentrating on not sinning, we can mis-live life by concentrating on not losing our rights before God and man.

That Thought is not to say that we should never take the first choice or never speak up to clarify our situation, but says that we lose a lot of power and grace when we act in order to get the better part or to justify ourselves. Nancy and I have good testimonies to share on this point, but must withhold them for personal reasons.

1. “Presence” is a real phenomenon, and is powerful. Parents’ presence with their kids is a tangible influence to them. Play a game with the little ones. Tell them to sit still and silent while you turn out the lights. The youngers will soon ask you to verify your presence. If you do, they are “faithful” a bit longer, until again they want to know if you are still there. Presence, even if invisible, is real and meaningful.

When the Lord told Moses to take the Israelites into the Promised Land, Moses said he was not going in unless the Lord’s presence was going in with them – Ex. 33:15. The Lord assured Moses of His presence, and even showed Moses all that He could do [all of Himself and His atuff], if necessary and proper in God’s plan. That was adequate for Moses – just the Lord’s “presence” and knowing all that the All-Mighty could do. Moses knew God’s faithful nature and absolute ability so, although God alone would decide how, when, where and if to act, Moses rested in the knowledge of His presence. Moses knew that God’s presence was an assurance of all things needed, according to God’s plan. The Lord would always apply Himself on Moses’ behalf, even when that application was to “do nothing.”

Such a “doing nothing” occurred on their first entrance into the Promised Land. First, the majority of the people and leaders did not want to go in because they did not trust God. That was an insult! Faith in Him was essential, and they believed neither Him nor His words. The next day, those unfaithful ones decided that they really should do what God said despite not having much confidence in Him. Moses told them that God’s presence would not be with them – Num. 14:42-43. They went in anyway, and lost the battle [because they neglected repentance]. As Moses had said, their God had not gone with them. On the other hand, He was with them to chastise and teach them in one of their dark times.

Jesus said He will always be with us – Matt. 28:20. We can’t see Him with our human eyes. If we begin to doubt His presence, especially during our frequent and needed “dark times,” we are not getting the benefit of our chastisements and teachings. We miss them as blessings. Those are valuable darknesses, times when we can see ourselves better, our unbelief, as signs that we need to move closer to the Lord in order to experience His glory. How? We usually just check in on His presence by using our faithful memories, without His having to do or say anything additionally. A silent remembrance of the Savior’s love, power and presence is adequate.

1. An example: In America, of women aged 18 to 34 who gave birth in 2016, 54% were unwed. No, we don’t have a morality problem here; we have a spiritual problem. The same can be said of homosexuality, alcoholism, illegal use of drugs, stealing, lying, pride, etc. We have a spiritual problem. Trying to fix problems by treating the symptoms does not help. That said, I will add this; the church has been responsible for our moral demise, but the church cannot fix our problems. Just as Israel could not fix the problem of their disobedience [see paragraph 3 of Thought 24 above], the church cannot charge into the fray and fix our immorality. But the Lord may grant us repentance so we can get straight with Him. Then He will lead us out of our current wilderness in His way and on His schedule.

In the meantime, pray beyond your natural expectations as if there is a living God who meant all that He has said, will do all that He has said He will do, and that your time to ask is now.