THOUGHTS OF APRIL, 2018

1. Have you been wondering why you have heard so much about spiritual power and so little about brokenness over your years of reading about and walking with the Lord? I will suppose that you have not been wondering, because the answer is obvious. Our flesh takes those two spiritual forces and mis-combines or mis-compares them. It is obvious that the Lord wants the church to have His power so we go directly for it. However, the way to living with Him in His power is through faithful brokenness.

When Jesus received His power [Luke 3:21-22] He was taken into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. During that time, He was tempted to use His newly-received spiritual power to prove Himself, but He did not fall for the offer. He had spiritual power but did not use it in that way. It appears that He had to solidify His meekness, His brokenness, the brokenness of His humanity, before allowing Himself to manifest the powerful messianic evidences that His Father planned for Him, but not those evidences which most of His people were looking for. His meek approach guaranteed that His ministry would be a 2,000 year worldly “defeat” [still considered to be that by His own people], not the pan-creational immediate and obvious victory that it was. My flesh, as did Jesus’ flesh, wants final victory now!! He received the power, followed the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, looked the devil in the eye, followed the way of meekness and brokenness, and then came out with the assurance that now was the time to use that harnessed power under His Father’s directions. And it was so.

When He was about to leave them, He told His disciples that they, too, would soon receive God’s power – Acts 1:7-8. Then they would become His type of witnesses. There is much to that brief sentence. It was not only a promise of power, but of which sort of witnesses they would be. They would be His sort of witnesses. They would receive the power of God to be meek and broken witnesses in their flesh so that God’s dynamite power could be heavenly directed. And it was so.

Everything of us must decrease in order for everything of the Lord to increase. That is a powerful process. It must happen, and we are an active part of the process. If we are seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, we are pleased to submit to the process of being broken – Matt. 6:33. Otherwise, the process is painful and prolonged and perhaps blocked, like walking out of the dentist’s office with our tooth half-pulled. Listen to current messages about power. Do they flow, for example, from the beatitudes and from Matthew 7:21-23?

1. Mountain climbing may not be very rewarding, until you reach the summit. Then it will be found to have been worth the effort and other associated costs. The rewards for living one’s life with the Lord cannot be proven beforehand, except by faith. But costs and unbelief persuade many to settle for half-way up the mountain, and then turning back. Let’s not do that. The Lord’s summit, the way to which is perfectly customized for each one of us, is just ahead.
2. If God isn’t, nothing matters. If God is, nothing else matters.
3. I was asked how the spiritual condition of a church can be evaluated. It is so very easy to recognize the spiritual condition of a person, family or congregation that I was surprised by the question. Basically, the difference between holy spirituality and carnality/religiosity is obvious, most of it quite readily obvious, but seeing to the depth of it is helped by spiritual experience and discernment. Holy spirituality is always focused on Jesus, not only during formally appointed times of meetings and liturgy but in the whole worship service and in the daily life of that family of God. On the other hand, religiosity shows as being its [ways, people, things, services] own main purpose, of and for itself, even though it may proclaim otherwise.

Where Jesus is worshipped and is the functional Head of that body, some things are evident:

1. The congregation is spiritually aware; thus, they see, hear and follow Him. They are not limited to just the abilities of human understanding.
2. The congregation is focused on Jesus Christ; they know Him and acknowledge Him as their Lord. Common words are not adequate; they must express their love for Him more deeply.
3. The congregation is temporally sacrificial, thus obey Him despite the “costs.” Some of the costs may still be painful, but pain mixed with joy is an entirely different process. Ask your mother about that.
4. The congregation is biblically submitted to Jesus’ lordship; thus, they walk with and according to Him. They have accepted the guidelines of His word, the Bible. They are not perfect but they don’t deliberately try to spin their way out of obedience.
5. The congregation is spiritually well-related within itself, thus showing forth Jesus’ loving, coordinated, healthy body. The need for simple order in the natural life is evidence of the need for simple, biblical order in the spiritual life where the invisible intangibles of order require even more of it.

Those are the things that come to mind as of this writing. More are likely available, such as having a righteous inspector’s attitude. If you love and are drawn to the congregation, your self-evaluation is probably accurate.

1. This is for you overcomers who suspect that you are an overcomer but may not know for sure. Here is a bit of evidence about you that is recorded in heaven on the book that has your name on it: “You are one of those who love those who nail you to your cross, and you don’t hold it against them. You know that they don’t know what they are doing. You bless and forgive them.” Keep your peace, stay on course, your confirmation is at hand. You have become united with Jesus’ behavior in the likeness of His death, so certainly you also shall be raised from the dead in the likeness of The Overcomer in the resurrection – Rom. 6:5.

Read Richard Wurmbrand’s “Tortured for Christ” and “Wurmbrand, Tortured for Christ, the Complete Story.” You will never be the same.

1. We are accepted by God, but only when we are in His victorious Son, our beloved Lord and Savior. So, it may be believed with complete assurance and unlimited joy that we are accepted in that beloved Son – Eph. 1:6. We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God by doing good works or by avoiding bad works. [But once we are His we can please and glorify Him by our faithful works.] Jesus did those works required for our salvation and we are in Him by virtue of our faith in Him, and even that is a gift of God – Eph. 2:8-10.

We are saved only in the Beloved, raised from the dead only in the Beloved, brought into heaven only in the Beloved, seated at the right hand of God only in the Beloved, will return to reign on earth with the Beloved only in the Beloved, and will live with God forever only in the Beloved. The Beloved really does deserve our full attention.

Total commitment is Jesus’ demand of all of His followers, not only of “a certain few because it is too hard or impossible for us commoners to attain or maintain.” It is certainly impossible if we are trying to add total commitment to Jesus to our present lifestyle. We must renounce our personal way of life and be ready to pay the price of whatever that decision may require. We can expect soon and ample opportunity to purify our lives because He will bring us into tailored situations where we will be strengthened by our faithful choices and even eventually by our unfaithful choices – John 13:36-38; 18:25-27; 21:4-23. Those choice opportune times will thin the self in us and bring forth Jesus.

Just as Jesus had no reservations before Pilate for the choices He had made and things He had said, never will we ever regret the consequences of our faithfulness. It is costly, but only to our flesh. That’s the purpose of its cost.

1. Jesus said He would build His church – Matt. 16:18. He said He would be the magnet for bringing others to Himself – John 12:31-32. Being of one accord is one of His requirements for creating and maintaining “church” – Acts 1:14. The world was blessed to see God in our human flesh – John 1:18. The world can again be blessed by seeing God in our one accord flesh – 1 John 4:12. The Builder of the church will accept only good and available material, which originally may not look good and available in the natural – Heb. 3 and 4. He builds with the materials that are diligent at being good and available – Eph. 4:1-6. He requires us to read His plans, to watch Him as He works according to His plans, and then to do what He is doing – John 6:6. Don’t be surprised if some days He doesn’t show up during construction. It may be that someone thought they had found a better plan, a short-cut, or less costly way to build Jesus’ church – Matt. 11:25. He will be back when the right material and His plans are again ready for His use.
2. Yes, all of us have good, clear, wise minds but how might you handle needing outside counsel if ever needed it? There is marriage, business, personal finances, health issues, etc. so from time to time we have the need for some level of additional wisdom and experience, such as when we need agreement, assurance, or even total re-direction. Do you already have those people at hand? Are they walking with you in every aspect of your life? Do they toss you a bone [advice] then let you go with it alone? Or are they counselors who will go with you to work it out? If they are that kind of counselors they will go all the way with you to victory or defeat?

King David was a man of faith and valor, of the type who are wise specifically but not very wise generally. He did very well for that which he was ordained but did not have what God wanted in the man who was to build and start temple life for God’s people. His son, King Solomon, was not King David’s sort. He was wise. He had that rare characteristic called “understanding.” That made him an excellent planner, organizer and sort of person to whom everything made sense. He knew that he was not in a randomly functioning world and, in that sense, people were the same as the remainder of God’s organized and logical creation. He was an accomplisher, mainly through wisdom – the proper use of knowledge. Part of his wisdom came from having listened to his counselors.

So, there was King David, then his son, King Solomon, then King Solomon’s son, King Rehoboam who came to the throne as an adult. King Rehoboam had the availability of his father’s wise counselors, and he used them, but he did not follow their counsel – 2 Chron. 10. Instead, “he consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.” On this occasion, those young counselors were wrong, but they told him what he wanted to hear. That got him into deep trouble. The kingdom was divided after having enjoyed years of unity and glory under the rule of his father and grandfather.

Then there was Paul the apostle. Although he knew that the Lord was with and leading him, and that he was obviously successful, he sought wise counsel – Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-35. It should be noted that he went to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, not to the entire body of believers for a congregational vote. From the united elders he received wisdom, insight and impartiality, and some of them went with him back to his missionary field so they could verify Paul’s report. They did not toss him a bone; they engaged with him to accomplish their counsel. That’s God’s real stuff.

1. Most things of God, man, and nature come down to two main motivators. Putting it simply and personally, which is a greater motivator for you, promises of pleasure or threats of pain? Our answer is shown by how we live, of course. Some choice of pleasure is carnal, some righteous; some choice of pain is carnal, some righteous. Are your conscious, deliberated decisions based on expected pleasure or expected pain? Do your reactive, shooting-from-the-hip decisions show a basic righteousness – that you are righteous before you can even think about it?
2. Another good definition of discipleship: “The process of faith and our will that causes the corruption that lingers in the Christian’s mind and body to be brought under control and changed in order to present an accurate reflection of God’s character within the believer by exposing and eliminating our original non-Christian religious habits.” James wrote about the problem and process in 4:1-3.

The goal of discipleship is to become a public witness who speaks as a messenger of the Gospel about Jesus, without being distracted by the carnal aspects of promises of pleasure or threats of pain. Disciples have their weaknesses exposed and eliminated as they grow in grace, and they are changed. Don’t crumble when you fail; failure is part of the discipling process.

1. How “good” are you at hiding Jesus in your life? He, Himself, was not very good at it but tried often. He certainly did not try to increase Himself; He did just the opposite. But He increased the more He tried to decrease. He actually hid from His people when they were ready to set Him up as their Messiah King. His siblings pushed on Him to go to the temple and proclaim Himself the Messiah, but His time had not come for ascending to the throne, and their way up for Him was not His way up. His way “up” was “down” and that is the way “up” for us. Nothing can stand before us as we go up by going down. Humility is a powerful force. When it is time for Him to be fully revealed, He will be revealed in the fullness of His glory.
2. I have read Romans 1:18-32 many times, always applying it to myself and others individually. It has a powerful punch in regards to not holding to a sin, not trying to spin or justify that sin, and not passing on to others our deception. But lately I have been reading it for application to cultures and nations, not to individuals. In doing that, it is easy to see the deep bondage we have to our multiple sins in America, and how we got here through that deceptive process.

The key to our deep sin was by suppression of the truth in unrighteousness [not by ignorance] – v. 18. At first, during my lifetime, the suppression of truth in America occurred because the vast majority did not take seriously the utter ridiculousness of those sins [homosexuality, abortion, euthanasia, family breakdown] among the very small minority, the fringe groups. Those very small minority groups joined together to have a loud voice politically and financially. Unified, they developed the means and the power to push, intimidate and to vote and to march in the streets. They magnified themselves in all ways and began to cow the slowly awakening and disorganized moral majority. By that time, few in the disorganized, apostate church were available for organized thinking, much less united action. The kingdom had been divided against itself and could not stand – Luke 11:18. It was rather easy for loud voices to silence compromised and weak resistance.

Now those forces are reaching into and controlling souls of individuals and groups, passing special laws against those whose thinking is “wrong” and “dangerous,” whose words are not considered politically appropriate. Those who repent and submit to mind-changing therapy are lightly penalized and allowed to resume life and work. Such results in major oversight of the thinking and actions of our news services, political parties, educational institutions, military, etc. Without a Holy Spirit revival, we are destined for an end of things righteous. Thank you, Lord, that you are slow to anger [Neh. 9:17] and do not change, so we are not consumed – Mal. 3:6.

1. In Acts 17:6 the religious leaders of God’s people were opposing Paul and the gospel. The complaint then was that Paul and others were turning the world [and their religion] upside down. The religious leaders were so entrenched in what they had made of God and His word that they found themselves on the opposite side of the Messiah whom they thought they were awaiting.

Today, much of the church finds itself in the same position and continues to deny their position. How is that? The cross demonstrates that we do not get what we [and God] want by trying to get it, but that we get it by “losing” in order to gain. We cannot receive from the Lord until we give up to Him. We have our wills and its purposes, but it is not our will that He wants, but His. It is into His hands that He wants us to commit ourselves.

We have to go through our own Gethsemanes and Golgothas before we can experience the effect of that truth. That means we have to give ourselves completely to the Lord, and go through the soul-dying process, before our words and initiating commitments mean something to us and the Lord. That is a “gaining through losing” process.

1. You have noticed that fire is not applied to the altar until the sacrifice is on it. The sequence is: conviction of sin, repentance, altar, wood, sacrifice, fire. Fire is deliberately applied by priests [faithful believers] or by the Lord Himself – 1 Kings 18:38. To start the process, we recognize that the church is occupied by a “mixed multitude” who are with us because of the benefits – peacefulness, cultural habit, beautiful music, nice people, good food, etc. – Ex. 12:38; Num. 11:4; Neh. 13:3. Then, some have “left their first love for the Lord” – Rev. 2:4. And, there are some who have “returned to their vomit” – Prov. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22. Then, those who are non-Pentecostal often do not want to be Pentecostal, non-Catholics do not want to be Catholics, and non-Evangelicals do not want to be Evangelicals. That simply points to a self-will among the religious that blocks the work of the Holy Spirit. Not that He wants us to change our denominations, but withholding blocks of our lives to our own dominion is a big block to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When we tell Him, “Hands off!” He leaves us alone, sort of.

And then the clergy are a major obstacle to reformation. Revival almost always starts among the laity. Why? It’s not because the Lord loves the laity more than the clergy, but because the Lord always pursues the humble because their hearts are prepared and are more available. The clergy are too comfortably situated to desire non-traditional changes that might require sacrifice in that way on their part. It is a real challenge for church [or other] leaders to lay their ministries and salaries and prestige on the altar. Remember, God’s fire falls only on sacrifice, not on an empty altar. An empty altar offers nothing to the Lord. Our hearts are being searched.

1. Variable and changeable; variable from person to person and changeable in each person from time to time. That’s the pattern of the disciple’s growth as we labor to get on and stay on the Lord’s agenda. Our success is variable and changeable but progressively better. Thank the Lord that getting us on our way is on His agenda, and we are told to pray for His success – ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

I think that your main conscious reason to pray is the same as mine, to receive answers for needs. But, prayer is the Lord’s main purpose for getting us closer to Him, to bring us to the point of yielding to His agenda, not ours, in regards to personal relationships and projects. We can work up a great deal of spiritual sweat while trying to get the Lord onto our agenda. But He is the Master and all is His agenda. A great part of our prayers covers the necessity of giving up our agenda and accepting His so that together [the Lord, I, and others] we can go forward.

1. How do you get that which is given only by the independent grace of the giver? There is no way. That Thought is to lead us into saying that there is no way to get grace, there is no way to get revelation, and there is no way to get salvation. There are many things that come to creation [including to creation’s humans] only through unmerited and unobtainable grace. We get them only when and if it pleases the Lord – Gal. 1:15-16. Paul knew when it pleased the Lord he was born through his parents by God’s grace, was called by God through God’s grace, and had Jesus revealed to him by God’s grace. We cannot over-credit the Lord’s grace in any matter. We are in the mix in some way and to some extent, but it is all by God’s grace.
2. In 1970 I walked around the top of part of the walls of Jerusalem. I was not especially impressed with the experience, although the Lord had given me a local Moslem businessman who made the arrangement and accompanied me. Icons, historical sites and the like have not been special to me since very early in my spiritual walk when I had an overpowering vision. I saw Jesus Himself. That resulted in a quick and distant fade of things religious. However, while reading Psalm 48 I have relented a bit on that position. In verses 12-14 the inspired one wrote “Walk about Zion, and go around her; count her towers; consider her ramparts; go through her palaces; that you may tell it to the next generation. For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death [forever].” So, I now am able to say that I walked the ramparts and am pleased with that gift.
3. Having come through Resurrection Sunday and the associated days before and after, it has been said that we Christians have an open and shut case for Jesus being the Christ. He was dead, He arose, and He lives on high. We have multiple witnesses to His death, resurrection and ascension, and they have openly testified. Ah, but we have even better evidence. We have the testimony of the victim Himself. All others can only corroborate His testimony. He, being the victim, was and is the best possible witness. Is that good law, R. N.?
4. It’s not surprising that changing cultures over the centuries have put pressure on the faithful to change solid Christian life and doctrines as the ambient cultural changes. Wherever the church is more grounded in the local culture than in the Lord, it has flowed with the culture instead of staying with Holy Spirit biblical life and faith. Both church and culture then suffer. Women have moved into positions of authority over men in families, military, politics, and of course, the church. In our lifetime we have seen, for example, the husband relinquishes his position while the wife has stepped forward as his competing authority. Women and wives are equal to men and husbands; however, they are “equals under authority.” There is more to say on the topic.
5. This Thought is biblical, but it may stretch the individual theology of some of us. The devil has much of his theology correct. He knows that the Jesus of Nazareth and of the cross is the Messiah, but that accurate knowledge does him no good; he is headed for hell. There are some people who believe like and only like the devil, and think they are headed for heaven. Then there are those who believe into Jesus Christ for salvation. And there are those who believe into Jesus Christ for salvation plus Life. Those of that last type are called disciples. They are being disciplined into the likeness of Jesus and know that the only way for that likeness to develop is for them to take up their own crosses daily [death to self-will] and follow Jesus [Life in the Spirit]. They know that “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” – John 12:24. The way of the cross is the way of accomplishing God’s purpose in us. It is powerful and irresistible, whereas other routes are impotent and variable. Jesus Christ has been planted in the “good soil” of our souls and the disciple fertilizes it with faithful obedience and sometimes with blood. But be patient; that which may be planted on Sunday morning does not bear fruit on Monday.
6. Now for a bit on covenant making and covenant keeping. Simply put, a covenant is an agreement between two or more parties. Some questions: 1) Why have a covenant? Answer: Two or more people [or animals] cannot get along without some type of general covenant plus some absolute aspects of their covenant. Our lives are full of covenants: Marriage, police, criminal justice system, church, education, transportation, food system, healthcare, Christianity. 2) Have you ever made a covenant as the one responsible party for making and keeping it? Parents do that with their children. You did that with your children. Jesus did that with us and His covenant of salvation. One-sided covenants are “heavy” and rewarding. 3) Some general covenants in our lives: What are the covenants in paying bills [pay all and on time], driving a car [safely and keep the rules, good repair], church membership [repository of gifts, available, orderly, leadership, obedience, authority], marriage and family [love, discipleship, obedience, leadership], as a Christian in the world [love my neighbor as myself]. 4) Have you been involved in an everlasting covenant? Yes, but only with the Lord. Marriage, for example, is not an everlasting covenant. Any shorter covenants? Yes; employment, citizenship, helping a driver with car breakdown. How short? Some for seconds or minutes. 5) Have you any absolute covenants [unlimited, irrevocable, all-encompassing, complete]? Yes; but only the Lord can keep those. Slaves and prisoners live in a similar situation but don’t keep them. 6) Do you have any that beforehand were designed to be costly when kept? Yes; all of them. That was and is the reason for covenant. The blessing of costly covenants are that God’s fire falls [only] on sacrifice, not on an empty altar. 7) Are there assigned duties and benefits in your covenants? Yes, of course; always. Or do they cover “whatever else comes?” Yes, some of that also. Are you now keeping good covenant in every covenant? Are you in good communication and attitude with others in covenant with you? 8) [Here is a bit of devil’s advocacy] “Considering your many, many covenants, what difference does it make how well you keep each of them? The Lord will love you anyway, and you will still go to heaven, and you are better than many other people, and nobody cares, and don’t be legalistic!” Have you also heard those whisperings in your ears? [Ugh!]

Examples of covenant making and keeping:

1) Jesus, of course. He made covenant with us on His cross and keeps covenant with us daily.

2) Israel and the Gibeonites – Joshua chapters 9 and 10. Israel neglected listening to the Lord but knew to keep covenants after they were made, even if deceived into making them. The Lord put His stamp of approval on their covenant- keeping in a powerful way. Even after around 400 years later, David knew that Joshua’s covenant with the Gibeonites had no time limit – 2 Sam. 21:1-14. The message: Keep covenant!! Go all the way. Even if it is a fringe event of the covenant, do it like putting whipping cream and a cherry on top of ice cream.

1. Let’s poke a bit of fun at ourselves. Remember how you felt when you were confronted with your sin – fighting with your sister, not doing your chores, getting a speeding ticket, accidently leaving one of your kids at a gas station and learning of it 20 miles later, losing your investment in a fail-safe, get-rich-quick scheme, cheating on an exam [whether exposed or not]? Our response was like, “Gee, thanks for pointing that out to me. I’m so much better for the correction.” No doubt.

Read in Nehemiah 5:1-13 about his correction of some rich fellow believers who were practicing usury. Their response was to confess their sin, stop the practice, sign an oath to hold to their promise, then “.. all the assembly said, ‘Amen!’ And they praised the Lord. Then the people did according to this promise.” Easy; exactly like us, right?

1. To reckon is to deem something, to make a judgment in a matter. It is a deliberate, calculated and intentional act. It considers the available evidence, weighs it in balance, and comes to a conclusion. That can be done after-the-fact, when we see the results, but many things in God’s kingdom do not happen unless and until we see them before-the-fact. That’s called faith. Without faith we cannot please God, and with faith we can move mountains.

We have many mountains in our lives. Some of those mountains are our recurrent sins. The Lord’s way for us out of our sinnings is through reckoning/deeming/considering ourselves dead to those sins and alive to God, because we are embedded safely within Jesus Christ – Rom. 6:11. That is the truth, and the truth sets us free to live righteously. We are still in the body of this flesh, and we are tempted – sometimes sorely. But the Lord is with us and makes His way with us as we pass through the temptation. Reckoning ourselves to be truly dead to sin is one of those ways. He rewards us when we decide to believe Him. We who are in Christ Jesus are dead to sin and alive to God.

We may need prolonged failure to humble us before we see final victory, but rest in there. He knows what we need and what He is doing. Our lives are tailored to fit Him perfectly.

1. The Lord unites. As usual, when He does something, it is done perfectly and with permanency. When He unites, it is done! When He joined man and woman He said, “.. and they shall become one flesh” – Gen. 2:24. He elaborated on the “done-ness” of that one flesh when He gave the laws of marriage and divorce. Marriage is a “done thing.” No matter how we got into it, it is done. [He gave us some wiggle-room there, but only because of our hard-heartedness.]

Then came time for the church. He gave His Son, Jesus, to close this most special deal. Through faith in the Son’s payment, we are made one with the Lord, forever. Exactly and as completely as we have been united with Him in His death, we have been united with Him in His life, forever – Rom. 6:1-11. What unity! What a plan! It sweeps away all of our flesh and gets down to only His plan. That allows it to be perfect and permanent. That strengthens our confidence to the end, does it not?

1. Church leaders, are you often discouraged [or worse] by the lack of commitment and involvement and service by the congregation? As you scan the situation, you do see a particular problem? If so, it is only a symptom, not the problem itself. Look further or elsewhere. That type of scan must start with one’s self.
2. When you focus on Jesus in the gospels, which things about Him stand out the most; so much that you appropriate them for yourself now? [You would enjoy this Thought more if you took a few moments to stop here and make your short list of observations.] My top four are: 1) He showed that He really was/is God in human flesh. He came/comes to those who knew about their God so they could recognize Him, but many did/do not. 2) He was/is a remarkable lover of sinners. Even the worse sinners were/are no problem to Him, and they experienced/experience that great love. It was/is like they/we had never sinned. 3) The religious leaders were/are enemies to Him. The more religious they were/are, the less likely they were/are to recognize Him for who He was/is. 4) I knew that He wanted to, could, and would take all of me and give me all of Him. That is taking some time to accomplish but it was/is “finished.”

Even those who were/are unbelievers recognized that He was/is God. His identity was so obvious that the Samaritan woman recognized Him in a few minutes; the Roman centurion recognized Him, resulting in the greatest faith that Jesus had seen in Israel; and the Syrophoenician woman was so humble toward Him that He gave her everything she asked for. When we recognize Jesus in every situation, He becomes the Lord of our situations and the answer to our needs.

1. Because Jesus appeared to say that the generation that saw Israel again become a nation would not pass away until He returned [Matt. 24:34], it has been questioned how long a generation is. The Lord must give us that answer before we can know the truth, because He defines times and all else according to His own dictionary. For example, He says “.. with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day” [2 Pet. 3:8; Ps. 90:4], and the days/thousands of years have continued to pass, until now we have accumulated 6,000 years, or 6 days. We note, also, that Adam was told to not eat the fruit of a certain tree because he would die on the day he ate it – Gen. 2:17. Then, although he ate it, he lived to be almost 1,000 [930] years old – Gen. 5:5. So, he did die on the day that he ate the fruit.

As usual, scripture answers its own question. The answer: Seventy years is one generation or, to quote my Bible, “As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years” – Ps. 90:10. Because Israel became a nation in 1948, seventy more years brings us to our current year, 2018. That verse goes on to say that if things are going well, one’s life may be extended to 80 years, meaning to 2028 before He returns. That 70 years and the possible up to 10 years extension were said to Israel. Israel is doing very well in some ways. They are a blessing to much of the world but are considered a stumbling block to others. Look up, saints!

1. Wisdom is distinguished by its righteous-ness as much as it is by its wise-ness. Wisdom is the ability to see from God’s perspective; that’s why it is distinguished by its righteousness, and why it is “hidden” from the unrighteous. Jesus encountered “unrighteous wisdom” head on, as did Paul, and others before and after. See 1 Corinthians 2:all. We cannot understand God and His ways from our natural viewpoint even if we are Christians. And, we can be christianized culturally, meaning knowing the commandments and having some commitment to them, but still be without personal relationship and cross-walk commitment to the Lord Jesus. The consequence is that we have to live by human understanding and power, which is where much of the church is mired. God’s ways are not obvious to the human mind and are often contrary. Life is therefore lived in the natural.

As the Christian religion is taken over by those who are non-spiritually minded [whether born again or not], the religious organization finds itself becoming human-minded and limited to human ability in all other ways. The church, dispersed among those of that sort of Christian religion, is not to be like that. As it grows in love and maturity, it should adhere to the Head, Jesus Christ, and to His instructions in the Bible and the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. The Christian religious field is part of the missionary field that we are called to.

Wise persons are distinguished by their righteousness – Jam. 3:17-18. The unwise are distinguished by their unrighteousness – Jam. 3:13-16. The Author of Proverbs chapter one agrees with the Author of the Epistle of James, of course [He cannot contradict Himself]. Everything starts with good character. That’s wise to remember when we enter the voting booth.

1. Knowledge is good, it is necessary, but I don’t have to tell you that it can puff us up. Paul told his disciple, Timothy, that some Christians were attracted to and good at learning, but they were never able to recognize and receive the Lord’s life-changing truth in what they learned – 2 Tim. 3:7. He said that reborn humans have the capacity to gather facts, and to teach others their gathered information [Jam. 3:1-2], but that their information may not change their lives. If we are like that, progress on our spiritual walk is blocked even though we have entered the Door – Matt. 7:13-14. A major problem here is that when we are that way, we don’t know it – our vast supply of knowledge and experience [plus the deceiver] blinds us to the truth about ourselves. Lord, deliver us from having the answers while not knowing the truth.
2. King David was fuming mad at his top general, Joab. Joab is the perfect picture of how dangerous is a deep personal commitment that is not first to the Lord. Joab would do anything for David, but the deed would be as Joab determined even if contrary to David’s orders. Joab is the Lord’s picture for us of an intense flesh commitment to anyone, to our nation, or to any group, when that commitment is not filtered through the Lord. Intense interhuman commitments are a setup for disaster. We are commanded to love the Lord our God with everything we are and have, and our neighbors as ourselves. That is the filter between us and is very different than an intense human commitment. Beware of the latter.

David made peace with the splintered segment of Israel and made an agreement to reunify the 12 tribes of God’s people. Joab did not like it, so he murdered his counterpart, general Abner. David was so upset with Joab that he pronounced a multiple curse on Joab and his house. In the Amplified Bible the curse reads: “Let it fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father’s house; and let the house of Joab never be without one who has a discharge, or is a leper, or walks with a crutch, or is a distaff holder [unfit for war], or who falls by the sword, or lacks food” – 2 Sam. 3:29. I can see David spitting fire as he said that. Yes, that is the same David who was and is the apple of God’s eye. It comes from the same Lord who provides grace to us.

1. Here may be something to add to your understanding of what we call the New Testament Days. In Psalm 118:22-24, which is quoted 6 times in the New Testament writings, it is said that “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.” “The day” is the time of the New Testament. The stone which the builders rejected is Jesus, the chief cornerstone of that which He is building.

My point here is that Jesus is not only the cornerstone-foundation of the building being built but also the builder [financier, architect, contractor, foreman, and workman] of the structure being built. Jesus said He would build His house, not help us build it – Matt. 16:18. We believers are not the builders; we are the material that the Builder uses. So, part of the good news of these verses is that we are the material but are not the builders. The Builder would never build so many dis-unified churches as we have.

He started us united in the Spirit in the bond of peace and gave us the responsibility of preserving that unity – Eph. 4:3-6. The more united we are, the more marvelous it is in His and our eyes. Given the opportunity, the watching world would agree with us.

1. If you have raised kids, you will remember with joy and have some ready stories about training them to ride bikes, scooters, etc. It went something like this: Push, run along-side, prevent falls, stop, restart, etc. In Psalm 107 enjoy the Lord’s testimony of doing the same with His children – the Jews and us. Pay special attention to verses 6-7, 13-14, 19-20, and 28-29. What a Father!
2. I know you. The Lord has given you your disciple’s tongue so you will know how to sustain your weary brother and sister with a choice word of eternal truth. You don’t waste it on idle or silly chatter. Every morning He freshens it, even before you brush your teeth. Then He fills you with more truth. Read about yourself in Isaiah 50:4-5.