THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2014

1. Have you thought along the line of “What was God’s main earth-purpose for saving me?” That means His near-term purpose for me, not His forever one. In some fashion our answer to that question will affect our approach to everything, such as the joining of ourselves to a local congregation. We will want to be with others, but not necessarily those of similar doctrines, color, social level, etc. We will be looking for the Lord’s place where we can lay down our lives in order to walk with Jesus and those believers. We will be givers instead of [only] consumers. Life will flow out from us into the desert of others’ souls, which will also be life-producing to us because in giving we are built up – John 4:31-34.

At this point we may pause to consider whether the Holy Spirit is flowing principally out of us or into us – John 7:38. I think that we do not know how many great things the Lord has done in our souls and lives, that we are well-equipped with testimonies, and that we are prepared for being and are the fulfillment of others’ needs in Christ. Part of that function is determined by whether we know that we are God’s gifts to others. Be available. Be God’s gift to the church and to the world.

2. A good brother, N. T., plays guitar and sings. He writes many of his own songs and has recorded. In one of his songs, “Just Start,” he quotes the Lord as saying to those of us who see only as far as our noses [so have a hard time starting]: “Just start, I’ll be with and lead you.”

Arthur Ashe [1943-1993], American professional tennis player, said, “Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.” When the Lord is with that sort of thinking and action, the resources and results are limitless.

3. Fear tends to neutralize a person or culture as does a lack of commitment. Fearlessness not only strengthens us, but frightens the enemy – whether human or satanic. There is power in confidence, especially when it is placed in the Lord. See David vs. Goliath in 1 Samuel 17.

4. If you are testifying to someone about Jesus Christ and your commitment to walk with Him, plus giving a few testimonies of His faithfulness in response to certain successes in your walk, what is your response to that person who says, “Be real.”? If that person is asking you to include your personal failures in your testimony, that’s good. But too often that person is asking you to step down out of the faith walk offered to each of God’s people and to walk as only a human – perhaps with a touch of righteousness from time to time. That’s not being real, unless it is about the life of an unbeliever. A Christian’s life is basically faithful, righteousness, and full of God-provided successes and realities.

5. How do you handle your “down times?” For the kids you may call them “times out.” Down times may be of short or long duration, such as hours or years. My longest was for 30 years, when the Lord set me on His “back burner.” During those years I was very busy. I practiced medicine full-time, taught Sunday Schools and Bible Studies, and otherwise occupied myself with home, church and social life. It was helpful that I knew what was going on – that the Lord had taken me from the front row of group spiritual life as I had known it, had curtailed my wide-ranging goings and comings, and was inhibiting my more obvious spiritualities.

It was very helpful to understand that I was being both pruned and cut off – John 15:1-17. Pruning is evidence of our Father’s approval of our service to Him [because pruning leads to more and greater production of the right fruit], and being cut off is evidence that He does not approve of other areas of service [meant to put an end to those disapproved areas]. The work is in our souls and on our services/ministries.

For those 30 years I occupied where He had planted me. I worked and studied and taught and learned and very much enjoyed myself. I settled where I was planted and blessed and was blessed by those with whom He had planted me. As far as I was concerned, if the Lord had left me there for the remainder of my earth-life that would have been fine with me. He is the Lord of life and does all things well. That’s what the Lord had instructed the enslaved Israelites to do in Babylon – settle down, raise families, get on with life, and He would be their future. Then He brought them out when He knew it was the correct time, as He had also done in Egypt hundreds of years earlier.

Moses had 40 years of his own private down time after he had to flee Egypt, until the Lord sent him back to deliver Israel from slavery. At age 80 he had given up any hope of being Israel’s deliverer, at least of his being confident of doing it “with God’s help.” That special down time had been so effective that when the Lord came for him with that assignment he knew he could do nothing of whatever God might want him to do -- that God would have to do it Himself. Moses’ down time was instrumental in preparing him to be the meekest man in the world.

Meekness is the confidence that someone can do anything when he is submitted to the power that can do it, and the contentment to do nothing. When God came to Moses at the burning bush Moses was the weakest man in the world, but that day after God had shown Moses His power in Moses’ hands, Moses became the meekest man in the world. It had taken God 40 years to get Moses out of Moses. It took one afternoon for Him to show Moses that only the meek shall inherit the Promised Earth.

Down times are not wastes of time. We may look at them as such if we are works-oriented or spiritualities-oriented. But if we are here to do only that which our Father wants of us, we can be content only with that – only what He wants. It was good enough for Jesus that He do only His Father’s will. That enabled Him to sit and do “nothing” as His friend Lazarus died. Likewise, obeying our Father is life-giving to and through us.

6. After Jesus’ water and Spirit baptisms, He was led by the Spirit into His wilderness experience for the purpose of being tempted by the devil. That was certainly not the only time He was tempted by the devil, but those other times He had other people and other things going on in His life for whom and which He was actively responsible. During those 40 days in His wilderness He was alone; much like one is alone on certain types of spiritual retreats. My point here is that the Spirit leads us into our many times of trial, and for the purpose of being tried, tested and strengthened. Many of those times are “alone” times, when we may be with others but no one is with us in our struggle. The struggle is often over unbelief because unbelief is such a basic problem. It may be a struggle over being unloving or unloved, another basic problem-area.

In my experience, the longer and tougher the fight the more glorious the results. When I see that I am in a trial and that it is simply between me and an evil power, I know that glory is ahead. When Jesus came out of that 40 day trial He was ministered to by angels and returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. Expect the same as you keep your peace in your trials.

7. Recently I have been re-reading some material written during our early years of walking with the Lord closely with others of equal commitment. That began in 1964 – 50 years ago. Many of us were attracted to the miracles but, unless we were soon attracted to discipleship, we moved away. Those who stayed were attracted to the cross. Unrestricted fellowship ensued. The cross became the decisive ingredient for effective “family” involvement and ministry. That required a willingness to change lives as much as necessary to fit into place as if each was part of a developing jigsaw puzzle.

Our unfolding spiritual gifts fitted us even more intricately together. Such was God’s design for our lives in that place at that time. The gifts flowed among us as easily as did our cars, homes and money. That degree of freedom was followed by God’s power at work among us to convert, nurture and strengthen others and ourselves. Peace and love were alive and abundant.

Order and governance were comfortable to all of us who were on The Way with our crosses, whether we were of the governed or governors. Those leaders spent hours together every day – praying, sharing in God’s word, discussing, listening, serving, encouraging and loving one another. We had a profound respect for the Lord in one another. We were privileged to walk with one another and the Lord through the garden of life, enjoying its abundant fruit. We experienced Jesus’ love as we beheld Him in one another. No price was even recognized as we received priceless grace.

8. Jesus’ instructions to His disciples as He sent them forth: 1) Go trusting and depending on the Lord. 2) Go to a peaceful group or to a group that settles into God’s peace when you offer it to them [otherwise, leave]. 3) Stay with that group in that “region,” sharing life with them. 4) Tell them that God is present and is absolutely in control of all goings on. 5) Pray without restriction. See Matthew 10:5-14; Mark 6:7-11; Luke 9:1-5; 10:1-11. Those instructions are still being followed by our brothers and sisters in many places, with similar results as had those first disciples.

9. What do we pray for when we pray for revival of ourselves and at-large? The church often prays for greater numbers of people and funds when it is failing. If it gets neither, it devises a plan for getting the neighborhood into the building. If Life is already there, praying for renewal would not have been necessary in the first place; if Life is not there, those who come in will be no better off.

But what to expect when praying for revival? If our prayers are from humble hearts we can expect them to be answered. First, conviction of sin begins to work in us. The “us” is the people of God, not unbelievers; not even the unbelievers in the church. Then open sins are forsaken, secret sins are thrown out, bad relationships are repaired openly. Revival is on the way.

Revival usually comes when it is the darkest, when everything seems hopeless. It comes to the worst among the church and brings into the church those who are the world’s worst. Staid religious leaders resist change [especially “back to the Bible” change] and cannot tolerate the new members who are “simply not our type.” The congregation often splits.

Are we sure we want to ask the Lord to send us revival? Perhaps we would rather devise our own program.

10. A. H., who has commented on every individual Thought over many years of reading THOUGHTS, reminds us that faith is something we would die for, but doctrine is something we would kill for. That is part of the history of the church. In fact, it is part of the history of God’s people of both the Old and New Testaments, and of all other religions. Currently, Islam is deeply into killing other Muslims who do not believe exactly like them, even if the variant belief is about who was to lead Islam 1,400 years ago.

Religion and doctrines are not worth living for, killing for, or dying for. The Lord is worth our all. Yet, our doctrines [and traditions] still dictate to us with whom we worship and with whom we will allow ourselves to have religious fellowship.

11. The Holy Spirit stirred Daniel to pray to the Lord for His people. Their circumstance was that they were enslaved in Babylon without any earthly chance of freedom. Daniel had read a few verses in Scripture that Jeremiah [25:11-12; 29:10] had written a few years previously, which spoke of the Lord ending their captivity after 70 years.

Daniel, now 82 or 83 years old, noticed that 67 of those 70 years had passed. He had been 15 or 16 years old when brought to Babylon in 605 B.C. It was now 538 B.C. What, if anything, were he and Israel to do? He was a man of God, had not been among those who had so badly sinned that their nation was “abandoned” by their God, and while in captivity had maintained his and others’ faithfulness over those difficult years.

He began to pray, beginning with confession of having broken God’s commandments, praise for God’s holy characteristics, admission of Israel’s basic sinfulness and shame [yet lack of returning to Him], and the rightfulness of their calamity at God’s hand. Then he asked God to forgive His people. You can find Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:4-19. Perhaps, with a little prayer, we can get into soul-step with Daniel.

12. What is the most important thing going on in your life? What is its real purpose? Is the Lord with you in it? Was it His idea originally? Have you had thoughts of laying it aside? Consider the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jehovah – Gen. 22. Abraham loved his son, Isaac. Abraham loved Jehovah. Which did Abraham love the most? Was Isaac Abraham’s idea or Jehovah’s idea? Abraham was willing to lay aside Isaac for Jehovah’s sake. Only Jehovah could solve the problem. He did.

13. Believers are justified through faith in Jesus Christ. Being justified means being considered and pronounced and related to as having never sinned. Can you reach your mind around the reality of God saying you have never sinned, and His relating to you as such? I think the absolute peace experienced by believers during out-of-the-body experiences is the result of having entered fully into that reality. While out of the body they were in a state of fully alive existence in which two persons are relating on the basis of neither having ever sinned [they being God and “me”] and the possibility of further sinnings have ceased [“the flesh” being no longer in existence so temptation has no object for its attempts at subjugation]. Selah.

Think of how we have wasted so much of life [from the time of our initial faith in Jesus, until now] by not abiding in the truth of our justification. It must be that we mix two truths, two unmixables like oil and water, into producing one error, meaning that when we sin we think our sin has in some very humanly logical way un-justified us in God. The truth is that we have only gotten mud on our white robe, not on our justified soul. If our sins can un-justify us, Jesus’ blood and God’s covenant have met the limit of their efficacy.

Our God has an entirely separate system set up for dealing with our sinnings, which has nothing to do with our justification, but is offered to us because we are justified. God’s dealings with a believer’s sins has to do with conviction, repentance, confession, forgiveness, and cleansing, with gaining or losing rewards – not with going to heaven or hell. Our justification [resulting in permanent and complete peace between God and “me,” including being with Him forever] has been unilaterally established by God, and is maintained only by Him. We are in Him forever. The believer’s righteous and unrighteous acts affect only our rewards in the hereafter. Good behavior did not get us into the Family, good behavior does not keep us in, and bad behavior does not put us out. Enjoy Romans 5:1 with me for a few hours.

14. Have you Christians noticed lately that you have at least an occasional conflict going on in your soul between two forces, the force of “sin in me” [not “the devil in me”] and the force of “Christ in me?” The “sin in me” force wants us to live by our old selves and old habits – the ones we learned from our old father [the devil] before we were born again into our new Father’s family. The “Christ in me” force wants us to choose to live by faith in His keeping power. See Rom. 8:12-17; Gal. 2:15-16, 20. Our deliberations, including those made every December 31, are ineffective compared to those made when we decide to believe that the Lord has linked me with Him and freed me from bondage to sin. Faith triumphs over effort, but don’t throw away efforts.

15. “Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.” -- Margaret Wheatley [1941-present], American writer. Consider taking that advice to heart at the checkout counter, in the elevator, at work, and perhaps even at church.

16. A third century A.D. theologian and bishop, Marcion of Synope [in modern-day Turkey], removed from both the Old Testament and New Testament anything Jewish and anything about Jehovah. It is reported to have been a very slim volume with little of the gospel. His modern-day spiritual correctors can be found in what are called “Full Gospel” churches, many of which are non-denominational, independent congregations.

Lord, bless those of your people who believe all that you have written, whether we understand or not. Set the church’s mind free to believe, trust, obey and enjoy the simplicity and harmony of your full word.

17. It has been pointed out that armies, industries and the church have much in common, all being in a world originally made harmonious and with the Creator still seeking to restore harmony within and among its divisions. One of those things in common is that all have certain people who are needed only when there is a breakdown or other crisis. These are not needed in times of wholeness and peace but become active when disharmony begins. They play prominent roles only when real trouble occurs. Then they spring into action and get things back on track.

They usually see problems before they began, when others don’t. That causes problems, doesn’t it! In the church they see early and isolated evidence of spiritual decline, followed by broader moral breakdown, then spiritual disease of epidemic proportion. In the Old Testament, Israel was given men like Elijah, Jeremiah and Malachi plus many other faithful ones who did not make the Bible record but served God’s purposes and were worthy of God’s approval – Heb. 11:35-40.

The current church is also blessed with such servants of the Living God. Their message is not “peace and prosperity in our day” but warnings of apostasy and defeat. They see us as being the Laodicean Church of Revelation 3:14-22. They write books and have the usual public and social media outlets. If you are especially fortunate, they are actively reproving, rebuking and exhorting in your congregation. They speak in the name of the Lord proclaiming the presence of unrighteousness and the need now for repentance and a return to righteousness. They are not anti-church or trying to take over. If they get impatient and pushy at times, don’t turn off their message. Those who are alienated will suffer loss.

18. Since you are like I am, I know that you try to make sense of life, even its smallest components. An uncomfortable uncertainty occurs when we lack understanding in an area of interest or necessity. Understanding can bring encouragement and comfort, even when it presents us with a problem – the truth. Usually, understanding is necessary before we can act upon a matter, such as in medical care, otherwise a second-class method or plan-B is used.

I have heard it said, by military veterans, that in certain ranks and at certain times understanding is not necessary but that obedience is. I suppose that is true, because I cannot imagine a soldier saying, “Sergeant, I’m not going to obey until I understand why.”

It certainly is good to have an understanding of a matter. Yet, when it is the Lord issuing a command or supplying a lead in a matter, faith is often the substitute for understanding. If we walk faithfully with the Lord we will experience many occasions of small and large, peaceful and dangerous, easy and difficult directions/commands/leadings when we must simply trust and obey Him.

Believing in the existence of the Lord Jesus but not trusting and obeying Him places us in or dangerously close to being in the same category as is the devil, who absolutely believes in the existence of God but does not obey Him – Jam. 2:19.

19. As mentioned briefly in Thought No. 17, all was harmonious in the beginning. Despite efforts spiritually [Matt. 17:11-12], things of creation have continued disharmoniously and are getting worse. That can be expected to continue until the end, with the exception of the church. Harmony [creation’s joint praises to its God ensuing from peace and unity] is one of those godly things that will not be restored until “the restoration of all things.” Scripture speaks of the stars singing and the valleys and mountains singing. All of creation resonated in symphonic agreement with the creator. Everything fit and functioned perfectly.

Brothers and sisters, that is offered the church, our families, and our individual relationships. As much as you have, don’t abandon it. Grow it. There should and can be harmony in everything of life: the church’s teachings, fellowship, leadership, corrections, singing, worship, recreation, workplace ministry, etc. When Joshua heard the shouting of God’s people who were worshiping the golden calf, he discerned that theirs was the “sound of war in the camp.” They were having a great time of fellowship and praise. If the Israelites had been worshiping Jehovah their sounds would have been harmonious with that which was going on in Joshua after his 40 days on the mountain with Moses and Jehovah. Israel’s shouts were not even the harmonious “sound of the cry of triumph” or of the “cry of defeat.” It was the “sound of singing” but not in harmony with spiritually healthy creation. That speaks to the nature of much of today’s music and singing, does it not? Being in harmony with the Creator is the basis for the Holy Spirit’s gift of discernment, and all else.

20. What did Jesus receive at the Jordan River? He already had the necessary spiritual power to resist temptation and to live a perfectly godly life. He had all that He needed to produce an abundant crop of fruit of the Spirit. He believed in answered prayer and undoubtedly had many answers to His prayers. He knew the presence of God His Father and had intimate communion with Him. So what did He lack?

He lacked the power of the Holy Spirit which would enable Him to attack Satan. He had resistance power, but He needed attack power which would enable Him to break down the gates of Hell. As with us, His Father had not allowed Him to be tempted beyond that which He could bear but as yet He had not what it took to fight Satan and to tear down his works.

Remember that God had always had everything necessary to destroy Satan and his works, but He had told the devil [Gen. 3:14-15] that it would be the seed of woman [a man] who would crush him. The Holy Spirit is given for personal righteousness to every born again person, but that power is not adequate. That power can withstand Satan’s attacks but is not able to successfully attack Satan. For 30 years Jesus was invincible, but for His last 3 years He was irresistible. You who have the Holy Spirit within, ask your Father to come upon you with the Holy Spirit’s anointing.

21. Each believer’s first test is to follow Jesus. A positive test result proves that we will not allow “things” to hold us back. Shortly thereafter comes the call for us to go beyond “things.” That means the next test is usually “relationships,” legitimate relationships. Then come natural desires, our opinions, our rights, our wills, our reputations, and even our lives. Everything of value is brought before us for our response. All we have been taught previously is diametrically opposed to being a disciple of Jesus. Thus, the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of their and our discipleship commitment. One thing this allows for is a timely drop out, before we have messed up our normal lives and have to mend it extensively, if at all possible. The Lord is full of grace: His call is to discipleship but if we do not [yet?] respond to that call, we still have a place in His kingdom.

The Lord is building His kingdom. He is looking for leaders. He is our example and teacher. He gives us the power and the keys to live as needed to be custodians, leaders, kings, priests, and overcomers in His kingdom. Thus the importance of the “stripping” Beatitudes [Matt. 5:1-12] and the anointing of the “redressing” Holy Spirit [Acts 1:7-8; 2:1-4].

22. The first list of those killed in action in the present war in Gaza in the Israeli Defense Force has been published. It consists of a major [the deputy commander], a captain, 4 sergeants [one originally from Texas and another originally from California], and one whose rank was undisclosed. I am always impressed by those KIA lists from Israel, both in eternal ways and by their ranks. As in this list, most of them are officers and high ranking non-commissioned officers. Why? Because the officers lead them into battle. I have been told that the IDF has no command comparable to “Charge!” Instead, the order is “Follow me!”

23. Will the Lord ever answer our prayers to our temporal detriment? Remember that even temporal detriments are eternal blessings. Will He give us the desires of our hearts even though they make the situations worse? “Yes” and “Yes.” Consider that Israel became tired of the same old manna every day so they grumbled and asked for something other than His daily provision [manna]. God gave them meat and a meat-caused plague swept through the camp – Num. 11.

Our “same ole manna” is things like the same spouse or children or job or car or church. Select your own “same ole” from your own “same old life.” Life is full of God’s gifts of “same ole mannas.” It’s amazing how those “same ole mannas” change to “new every morning mannas” when we get straight with the Lord.

Then there is good King Hezekiah. He was mortally ill and on God’s schedule to die at a fairly early age. Hezekiah prayed for healing from his illness. The Lord not only healed him but gave him 15 more years of life, during which years he had a son – Manasseh, who became one of the most evil kings Judah ever had.

Yes, the Lord does answer prayers that are not in our best immediate temporal interests, but He has ways of turning all bad things to good when we love Him and yield to His purposes. Don’t try to take advantage of Him in that process. It’s like playing cards with Him -- He can’t lose.

24. In Old Testament days, the future of the world was presented through types and shadows [using natural events] of the coming King and His kingdom. In our New Testament days the future of the world is presented as the betrothed [in hope] eagerly awaiting her Beloved. In the millennium the future of the world will be presented by the bride [in fulfilled hope] honeymooning with her Husband. Thereafter, the future of the world will be realized as the couple abides as one forever in their heavenly home.

25. When Satan was cast out of heaven onto the earth he was given the title of Prince Of This World – John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Acts 26:18. Purpose and authority came with the title, without God giving up any of His own oversight, authority and power. In God’s overall plan, totally evil Satan has a divine, necessary purpose. Mankind could have been created sinlessly perfect, a righteous robot, but he then would not have been like God, and re-creating Himself was/is God’s purpose in mankind. Mankind had to be free to sin, then sin, and be redeemed by faith in our Redeemer. For that, he had to be fallen, then have and choose his Redeemer.

Various places in Scripture indicate that every political unit [nation, city, etc.] has one of Satan’s evil henchmen in charge locally – Dan. 10:13; Eph. 6:11-12. We cannot avoid doing battle with them [Eph. 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; Col. 1:13] unless we simply surrender or refuse to believe in our opponents and their activities, which is also surrendering.

After saying all of that, it is remarkable that the church and its Head [Jesus] and the world systems and its head [Satan] are the mix of this world. The church is here to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil on its way to becoming like God; the world is here to overcome the church, the Redeemer and God Himself. God’s project is of created man becoming like never-created God. The two systems are like oil and water – they do not blend no matter how much agitation is applied.

There being two kingdoms which occupy the same space, the kingdom of God [under a King] and the kingdom of This World [under only a prince], certain regulations must apply. Our King has told us to obey the rules of This World [short of sinning], because all authority is of Him. That makes it tough on us at times because our peaceful disobedience [coupled with our unrighteous disobedience] is not met with much leniency. That problem seems to be increasing in frequency and severity, but God always gives grace to the humble. Our King trumps that prince in every case in which we are obedient because He has earned and been rewarded with total mastery in heaven and on earth. We share in that reward as we walk humbly with Him and don’t change as we interface with the world.

So, what must happen for the church and its ambient culture to mix, harmonize, and cooperate? How can churches and other faith-based organizations cohabit with civil governments – 2 Cor. 6:14-18? Either the redeemed must become adequately worldly [not so difficult, it seems] or the world must be adequately redeemed. It is for the latter that Christ came into the world and for which we have been equally equipped as our Redeemer. That is what is going on in many political units today, including here in Corpus Christi. We are seeing our local top workplace leaders unifying and living and leading righteously, knowing their kingdom callings. And, clarification is coming to the formal church, meaning purity of purpose and understanding of that which the Lord is doing.

26. “The young do not know enough to be prudent and therefore they attempt the impossible – and achieve it generation after generation.” – Pearl S. Buck [1892-1973], Christian, American writer, daughter of American missionaries in China, 1932 Pulitzer Prize winner, 1935 Nobel Prize in Literature winner.

27. Can you fit one or two things into each of the following categories? Examples are my contributions.

1) Some things always fit into my life. Ex.: being sweet to Nancy.

2) Some things fit only occasionally into my life. Ex.: vacations, one every 20 years, probably

because my life has been a continual vacation for the past 50 years.

3) Some things formerly fitted into my life but now don’t. Ex.: medical practice [a job].

4) Some things never have fit into my life, but I tried. Ex.: heavy drinking, etc., etc.

5) Some things never did fit into my life, and I never tried. Ex.: smoking, foul language [even slang].

28. One of the many Louis Fortins said, “The important thing in life is not to have a good hand but to play it well.” That applies to the almost limitless variations in race, economics, social positions, education, physical abilities and disabilities, and you name them. The Lord gives all of us the opportunity to be successful, whether in leading and influencing millions or only of one’s own self. Restraints and freedoms are orchestrated by the Lord. We are responsible only for being successful in those He has put within our reach, for which in many cases we may need to remarkably stretch.

29. For those of us who share, care and pray for Israel, the following is a report on the condition of Israel, who is at war with Hamas: “Something is happening in the nation of Israel. 30,000 attend the funeral of a lone soldier. Wounded soldiers struggle to return to the field of battle. Reserve units reach 130% of enlistment. The public throngs at the doors of hospital wards, offering sweets and love to the wounded. The junctions [highway intersections – ed.] are filled with flags and wonderful youths. The current generation of fighters and commanders is displaying its courageous and professional colors. Bereaved parents catch you by the arm and say: ‘Not in vain. Onward to decisive victory.’ The nation of Israel is united as it never was.”

30. As you know, last month [June] the Pope met for prayer and fellowship in his Rome apartment with the President of Israel and rabbis [Jews], the President of the Palestinian Authority and imams [Muslims], and the Patriarch of Constantinople and priests [Eastern Orthodox]. Each prayed in respect of their own traditions and faith.

That brother [the Pope] “has done it again!” This month [July] he has met with Evangelical Christians in an Evangelical-Pentecostal church in Italy. He called them his brothers. Early this year, he had met with two prominent Evangelical-Pentecostal American ministers. In this July meeting he apologized for certain of the Roman Catholic Church’s persecutions of Pentecostals, saying that there is unity in diversity within Christianity.

That sort of outreach is a first for popes. The Lord is working to establish John 17 among His people. As always, there is and will be counterfeiting of the Real Thing, but pray for and speak up for the Real Thing while avoiding the inevitable counterfeits. Counterfeiters only copy something good. On the other hand, some Protestants will recoil at any talk of brotherhood with the Pope or Catholics in general, placing themselves in Ananias’ initial position as shown in Acts 9:13-14. Pray that Protestants will be as sensitive to the Spirit as was Ananias, considering that the payoff was worth the risk.

It is not an easy thing [for our flesh] to open our hearts and minds after being on guard, judgmental and equally unrighteous ourselves for centuries.

May the Lord fill you with goodness and mercy, because Nemo dat quod non habet.