THOUGHTS OF MAY, 2013

1. If you really feel down, especially because of personal failure [and a long, intentional failure, at that], meditate on Isaiah 41:14-16. You may need to read it in some paraphrased edition of the Bible because it reads with difficulty in most translations. Let me give you Bob’s paraphrase: “Don’t be fretful because of your failures, my princes. I have been and still am with you. Don’t minimize Me, the Almighty, the Lord, and your Redeemer. I have remade you. You are a new weapon. You have my strength. I will use you to tear down that which exalts itself against Me. You will expose the chaff and I will blow it away. Rejoice in Me. Enter my glory.”

Those few verses are directed toward a chastised people and are loaded with God’s love and grace. It is when we see our flesh as it truly is, containing no good thing, that He can use us.

2. Counselors of the depressed have long looked for ways to revitalize their clients. Advice-type efforts have ranged from, 1) get out of the house, get busy, take up a hobby, through 2) make some friends, marry that 5-year fiancée, get a cat, to 3) turn to God, go to church, start planning an elaborate party or vacation.

 For simple doldrums, simple advice helps. For profound depression, the answer is not simple. It can be a constant or recurrent life-long problem without any one answer. It appears to be a physical and/or spiritual problem. In my small, one-man experience, profound problems require profound solutions, but profound solutions can be very simple, at least in their essence.

Of course, I’m speaking of having real faith in the Living God through Jesus Christ, followed by an active walk in the Spirit. The results of that simple solution know no boundaries. Mind problems, whether physical or spiritual, must yield to the reality of His presence.

Joseph Addison – 1672-1719, British essayist, poet, playwright and politician, said: “Three great essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.” No surprise then to find that, as a Christian, He was able to apply the Truth to his workplaces. He wrote poems of praise to God, commonly as a result of being stirred by the Psalms.

3. “Deliberation [long, careful, formal consideration] is the function of many; action [accomplishment] is the function of one” -- Charles de Gaulle, French general and statesman. Leadership steps up, leads, and gets things done so that the masses do not get disoriented while circling the drain. That’s associated with, “Those who want to do the will of God will know God’s will” – John 7:17.

4. If we know ourselves like Paul knew himself [“I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” – Rom. 7:18], we have accepted the work Jesus accomplished on His cross and have surrendered our ways over to His ways, our will to His will. That means we [intend to] do nothing on our own because it would indeed be exactly that, “nothing.” The results of self-work may be praiseworthy in our own or others’ eyes, but be “nothing” in God’s eyes. I’m speaking of the way of the cross, our crosswalk, which is something to be felt, seen, and alternately joyfully and painfully experienced in every area of our lives.

The Lord constructs our lives so that we may and must live one decision at a time. Once our decision to walk in the way of Jesus has been made and developed into at least a bit of an established habit, life becomes less complicated, does it not? No longer is it muddied with the question of whether I will do God’s will here or there. Life is clearer when we pursue that which is His will.

Yes, the flesh will still do battle with the Spirit, but our choice is settled! Habits plus clear, deliberate choices are a powerful combination.

5. If someone had won a mighty victory, but I had nothing to do with it [in fact, if I had worked against Him a bit], but that victorious Person took me into His home and permanently granted me all of the benefits of His victory, how could I lose? There would be only two ways to lose – He could throw me out [if my more-than-victor status was based on my adequate subsequent performance] or I could run away [if my more-than-victor status was based on my “staying in the house.”]. Neither of those ways is possible for the more-than-victors who are in Christ. He chose us, delivered us, and is united to us eternally. [This Thought has to do with our initial and permanent salvation relationship with the Lord.]

However, there is a way for us who are more-than-victors to not live in that victory. We can become convinced that being given our more-than-victors status is not adequate; that we need to become victors on our own, to add to the victory or to make it firm. The enemy whom Jesus has defeated tries to convince the more-than-victors of that very thing. After first trying to tell us that we need to earn our salvation [and losing that initial debate], he tells us that now we need to maintain our salvation. Wrong.

However, there is something that we have been given at least some individual responsibility for, and that is becoming an overcomer. Becoming an overcomer [an “on our own” thing] is directly tied to the living out of our more-than-victor status.

6. Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed if it is not faced. Jesus told us that the truth would set us free – John 8:32. How many times I have been tempted to believe something that was just a little off, and I knew it! According to the best of my memory, I have rejected that slightly tangential deviation/lie, even while sometimes pursuing the [tasty, warm, exciting, “fulfilling,” “due-me,”] sin it offered. It was grace through knowledge of the truth that would bring me back on course.

7. The devil must be dealt with from time to time, and in Christ he can be, but all of our problems do not have to do with him. Even after he has been put aside for a while, we find that we have not solved all our problems. We still have something deep to deal with. That problem is within each of us. It’s called “our flesh,” and it will be with us until we leave this earthly body.

But don’t despair. We need “our flesh.” It is the necessary weakness of “self” which requires us to learn and to use faith, without which it is impossible to please God – Rom. 8:8, Heb. 11:6. Properly placed faith enables us to rise above yielding to and living for our flesh/self. That’s what our Heavenly Father really likes; seeing His weak-because-of-the-flesh children living by faith in Him, and thus rising up on eagles’ wings in the Spirit while yet in this natural body and world.

In 2 Kings 6 Elisha’s servant saw the natural obvious situation and judged it with his natural obvious mind. If he had tried to solve the problem as he saw it, he would have had to do it through his natural obvious, and inadequate, ability. That was all he had to work with. But when the Lord opened his spiritual eyes to see the whole spiritual situation, the whole situation was handleable spiritually. If he had denied the spiritual, he would have been in a mess [the same as if he had denied the natural]. Denial of the truth would have been like Japan denying that the United States had the atomic bomb. The evidence was there and they had to act upon it as the truth. Being blind to our adversary does not make him go away, no more than denying God makes Him go away.

Something we may know but often forget is that this natural life is only a dressing room for eternity. It being the only life that we know until we are born again from above into God’s life, it is understandable that in our flesh we should seek after the things of this world as we did prior to our rebirth. It is also understandable that once we have entered into life in the Spirit we should seek after things holy and spiritual by faith in the Holy Spiritual One.

Here is a little “aside note.” The natural counterfeit of faith is optimism. It is good to be an optimistic faithful person, but natural optimism may lead us astray, such as when the Lord is taking us in another direction, like into repentance, grieving or ‘rending our hearts.”

8. “All truly wise thoughts have been thought already thousands of times; but to make them truly ours, we must think them over again honestly, till they take root in our personal experience.”

 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German artist, writer and politician.

Right. Most of you have read more than once that I “have written nothing of myself.” All has come from other sources – inspiration of the Holy Spirit, things and people whom I have read or heard, good teachers, and experience from which the Lord has given me insight. No matter how it came, I had to digest it before it could come forth as mine.

I do the same thing when I pass along some counsel. I advise the recipients to think and pray over what I have said, digest it, and then do in faith that which the Lord leads. Counsel is the art of passing on to others that which the counselor has learned and digested for himself.

9. There is an outlook that says the world is getting better. There is another outlook that says the world is falling apart. “The world” means people, society, standards and accepted norms. I hold to the observation that the world is alternately doing both, that the natural course of the world is downward, and that the Lord works from time to time to restore it to some degree that suits His then purpose.

In about 300 B. C. Aristotle said: “When I look at the younger generation, I despair for the future of civilization.” Peter the Monk said in 1274: “The world is passing through troublesome times. The young people of today think of nothing but themselves. They have no reverence for parents or old age. They are impatient of all restraint and they talk as though they know everything and what passes as wisdom to us is foolishness to them. As for the girls they are immodest and unwomanly in speech, behavior and dress.”

Without God’s occasional intervention, the world would have devolved long ago into a pack of unrighteous hounds, much like and worse than in Genesis chapters 6 and 11. Other occasions of His renewal actions have been spiritual ones, outpourings of His Holy Spirit, such as occurred in Acts 2 and many other times in the 2,000 year history of the church. I think that without the renewals the world would have been a morass long ago.

I think that every reader of THOUGHTS [giving each of us the benefit of any doubt] will get a front row view of what I’m talking about after the Holy Spirit and all born again believers have been removed from planet Earth. This place will quickly become a terrible mess and nothing will get better until we [Jesus and we] return.

In the meantime, “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life” – Phil. 2:14-16.

I am thankful for the Lord’s intervention in my life, in the ongoing life of all my family and many friends, and in society. He is full of grace for our looking outwardly and upwardly.

10. ”To be crucified means, first, the man on the cross is facing only one direction; second, he is not going back; and third, he has no further plans of his own” – A. W. Tozer.

11. I can tell you when the Lord Jesus will return, but will let you see it for yourself in Romans 11:25; Matthew 24:14; Revelation 5:6-10; 7:9-10; 14:6.

There are 16,586 people groups in the world today. That means ethnic groups, not what we call “nations.” Every “nation” has been reached with the gospel. When Scripture says “nation” it means ethnic or people groups, almost half of which have less than 2% [or no] Christians among them. One example is the Muriya tribe in India which has less than 100 people.

He said that His word would be preached to all nations, and then the end would come. It is spelled “M-u-r-i-y-a and they are in India.

12. Anyone who knows what the church is [that body of humanity separated from the world by the revelation of Jesus Christ] knows certain things they don’t have to be told or, if they are told, they have a quick and positive response to having been told. This is what they know: 1) Who is the head of the church. 2) Who bears authority in the church and who does not. 3) Who are the elders of the church. 4) What each member is supposed to do.

The church is a living family. Every member is on equal ground. We all stand before Him, the Head, Jesus Christ. He plays no favorites. No one has preferential treatment. All are equally valuable. All have responsibilities. Brothers and sisters in this family hear God’s word and keep it, which makes them easy to recognize because they “bear fruit” that makes them resemble their Father. None are perfect.

13. Psalm 109 is about Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Peter applied it to the disciples’ situation in the upper room when the disciples then numbered only 11. He was moved on by the Holy Spirit to do something obvious to them – replace Judas. And they did, as they and the Holy Spirit chose Matthias. Peter quoted or paraphrased Psalm 109:8 and Psalm 69:25, which supported his revelation that they should select Judas’ replacement.

Peter and the Holy Spirit also applied other Scripture to that situation, but my Thought here is that many of the Scripture verses used by Jesus, Peter, Paul and others really did not clearly say that which they used it to say. Actually, they did apply but only via Holy Spirit revelation to malleable minds then as to us now. Just like the Scriptures supported Jesus’ claim to be the Messiah, God’s Son, those Scriptures were not clear enough to the natural mind for them to convince those who were not granted God’s revelation in the matter. The natural mind cannot grasp spiritual things – Luke 24:45; 1 Cor. 2:14. In later years, Peter was still having trouble understanding some of Paul’s revelations – 2 Pet. 3-16.

That’s the way our Heavenly Father wanted and planned it, as in Matthew 11:25-27. Jesus had no problem with His Father doing things in His earthly life that way, and so should not we.

14. Thought 13 can stand alone, but leads into this Thought. How often do you get the victory in life’s matters? How long does it usually take for you to get the victory? If we knew that the victory is not a thing or an attitude or an experience, but instead is the Person of the Man Jesus, the victory would never be future or far away. God has given us His Son, making Him to be our victory now.

Thus, victory has nothing to do with the devil or our sinful flesh, but with Christ Jesus. If you have more faith in/confidence in/focus on the devil or your flesh than you do on Jesus, that explains your lack of victory.

Victory is Christ.

15. Musicians know that “playing like oneself” or expressing one’s soul musically, takes a lot of time and practice. They did not “play like their souls” the first time they picked up their instruments. One or both their music and souls were out of tune. After lots of practice, and much harmonizing of their musical instruments with their souls, they were able to express themselves [their souls] through their music. They had wanted to be expressive from the beginning, and that desire motivated them onward, so they persisted in varying degrees of confidence [faith], gradually harmonizing the two.

Pre-King David “played like himself” from his early years. King Saul was no musician, but he had a soul that David could harmonize with his own soul when David played his stringed instrument. However, Saul’s soul was fragile and fickle. It changed in response to evil, contrary factors that were devised to overcome his righteous responses to David’s music.

In Psalm 57:7 David said his heart was fixed on the Lord. The result was that he sang praises as he played his instruments. On an occasion, Moses and the Israelites were summoned to a particularly dry place by the Lord – Num. 211:16-18. It was a dry place but when they aligned together under Him and began singing to Him, they received their water.

Astronomers tell us that space is filled with beautiful and strange sounds from “out there.” It seems like God’s creation has been made to resonate with Him as it goes about its assigned purpose. Scripture speaks of trees singing, valleys singing, ships singing, kingdoms singing, and of course, people and birds singing – all to the Lord. None of that is surprising because the Lord told Job [38:7] that while He was creating creation even the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God [angels] shouted for joy.

I’m thinking that when we are born again is the time that we first “pick up our instruments.” The process of sanctification requires that we take up our crosses daily and [learn to] follow Jesus. The Holy Spirit is a good maestro. He raises his baton, we take up our life-giving instrument, we first sound like an elementary school orchestra, but then we begin to make reasonably good music. In time, we are talented enough to begin expressing our souls.

Back to my Thought: We Christians can make all kinds of “sounds” but if we want to express Christ, to harmonize our souls with God and our brothers, we can take up our instruments/crosses and follow the Director. Searching for fulfilled lives under another director gives another expression of cacophony.

16. The kingdom of God shows itself in many and diverse ways, but at some point sermons, singing, and even godly character are not adequate. God’s life, power, glory and majesty must come forth and meet the needs of people in and out of the church. What things am I talking about? For example, casting out devils and healing the sick of mind and body. It is quite understandable that God’s raw power should show in His unique kingdom.

17. “If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end: if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth.” – C. S. Lewis, Irish writer

18. Within the stories of how the Lord dealt with wicked cities are additional stories. In the stories of Sodom [Gen. 18:17-33], Jericho [Jos. 6:22-25] and Nineveh [Jonah 4:10-11] the Lord did not allow evil to go unchecked forever. He removed the righteous ones before He destroyed the cities [Nineveh repented], and the righteous ones who were first delivered were righteous only by faith, not by deeds. What a revelation!

That should be no surprise to us, because that’s the nature of the God whom we know intimately. Ezekiel [19:23] knew Him also, and wrote for Him: “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? On the contrary!“ The Lord has pleasure giving life to the penitent wicked.

19. What is there to be thought of the giants who were in the Land? They were there in the pre-flood days of Noah [Gen. 6:1-4], had repopulated on Earth in the days of Abraham [Gen. 14:5], were still there during Joshua’s days [Num. 13:22; Josh. 11:21-22] and David’s [1 Sam. 17:4]. Various groups of them were called Raphim, Emim, Horim, Zuzims [Zansummim] and Anakim. Apparently they were the offspring of unions between earth women and fallen angels [“sons of God” – Gen. 6:1-4; Job 1:6, 2:1].

Their contamination of the human gene-pool may have been one of the reasons the Lord brought the flood on the earth during Noah’s time, while preserving Noah and his family, because Noah was not only righteous but was also “perfect in his generations.” See Genesis 6:9.

Which may point to at least one of the reasons the Lord instructed Israel to wipe out whole nations. There were additional reasons: Whole nations were sold out to live and do evil [child sacrifice, false gods, bestiality (a reason for all the animals to be killed), adultery, homosexuality, incest, etc.] and they had invited demonic activity by practicing sorcery, witchcraft and consulting with evil spirits. He had withheld His judgment until “their iniquity was full,” meaning they were beyond redemption or then could be held completely responsible.

20. In my boyhood days of church life we sang a song that asked, “Are you satisfied with Jesus?” I didn’t know Him at that time but I knew things about Him. Thus, I could do no better than apply myself in the flesh to obey the rules – of the Bible, the church, of family, and of various social groups. As a good farm boy I was able to do quite well until I left the nest and went to college, where I was not satisfied with life as I had known it. The world was an open door. I’m thankful that it was the 40s and 50s, and not the 60s and 70s when unrighteousness burst forth across the nation as a new rebellious force and life-style.

What I’m leading to in this Thought is that I was mostly satisfied with what I had but not satisfied sufficiently as the world progressively opened to me during my college years and afterwards. It was not until 1964 that I was finally satisfied. The Lord rounded me up with a small group of others of life’s stragglers and became the bread that satisfied me. Since then I have had fleeting times of hungering after strange bread, but none that persisted or even briefly satisfied.

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst” – John 6:35. I have been grasped by the One who spoke those words and by their truthfulness, so I can testify to their efficacy. The Holy Spirit feeds them to me daily. The presence of Christ in me satisfies my hunger. If I am not satisfied at any time, the Holy Spirit helps me find the problem and we fix it. The fix may be the removal of a temporary patch on a basic problem that on His schedule for my soul is now time to really fix.

Many fixes are “simply” advances in faithfulness as He shows me that there is nothing good in my flesh – Rom. 7:18. In the natural I had and still have lots of “good” flesh as the world measures good, but it is not profitable to the Lord. I can heal the sick and feed the hungry, but it may be “nothing” to the Lord and “nothing” to me. NOTE: Until the Lord progressively peels off those layers of flesh, they are part of that which I have been given to live by and work with. I am His workmanship, as are you.

21. News out of Israel via Arutz Sheva, a non-government news agency, indicates that things are again getting heated between Israel and its neighbors. That includes Syria. When I see that, I remember Isaiah’s [ch. 17] oracle in which he says Damascus will be removed from being a city and become a fallen ruin. That prophecy has never been fulfilled, so its destruction is yet ahead. We are living in strange, wonderful and dangerous times.

22. This Thought is a question: Is the Great Shepherd able to protect His sheep? He is so far off there in heaven. [Yes, it’s a long way by space ship; No, He has never left us.] It has been so long since Jesus left. [Yes, 2000 years; No, 2 days.] We are fending for ourselves here on earth. [Yes, we have self-responsibility; No, He is continually working all things for our good.] There is one thing that is definite. His sheep are all alike in that we continually try to go our own way – Is. 53:6.

How does He handle this problem among His sheep? He disciplines us so that we will stay close to Him. That is something! When I disciplined my sons they did not usually want to stay close to me. That’s true of His sheep, also. If we rebel under His chastisements, we get into greater trouble with Him and with the wolves from which He is protecting us. If we learn from His chastisements, we stay closer to Him. In my opinion, we have difficulty perceiving whose hand is upon us when He is chastising us. We call it an accident, bad luck, common expectations, or the devil at work.

Lord, help us recognize your hand upon us, no matter which instrument you use.

23. Waiting on the Lord can be defined two ways. One is that we are to be personal waiters to Him. If you have ever seen a real professional waiter/waitress at work you noticed that he is “invisible.” He sees, knows and attends to everything at the table without getting involved in it. He refills glasses without asking or being asked, and does that without interrupting conversations. He doesn’t have to be told things to do because he has his full attention on the table and diners.

The other type of waiting on the Lord is a time thing, like waiting for the sun to come up. We can wait with patience, or without patience. We might call both inner conditions [patiently or ancy] “waiting” but the Lord calls it waiting only if we are at peace within while we are waiting. If we are waiting but are ancy, we are not waiting.

That’s sort of like the Lord calling us adulterers if we have only looked lustfully at a woman, or calling us thieves if we are only not generous to the poor, or calling us murderers if we only hate someone. The Lord looks at our hearts, not only at our outward actions. Waiting is a matter of the soul and calendar.

24. In the past 12-15 years the Lord has spoken several things of His plans for Corpus Christi. Some of those things are: 1) He will pour out His Spirit, principally in the workplace. 2) The church[es] is being given an opportunity to repent and live and preach the full gospel so that it/they may become servant-brothers to those of the outpouring. 3) He intends to manifest the presence of the government of the kingdom of God, which will restore order out of chaos. 4) An evidence of the presence of the government of the kingdom of God will be a peace that remains composed in the face of resistance, hostility and conflict. 5) Corpus Christi is not the final destination of God’s intent here. 6) His leaders are to look to pass leadership to others, while continuing to lead from within others’ headship.

The most recent word, of only this year, states that late this year there will occur an event that will change Corpus Christi. We do not have long to wait to see if that word is true or not.

25. “Never do a wrong thing to make a friend or to keep one.”

 – Robert E. Lee, American and Confederate States of America general

26. If we were expecting a phone call from someone, and the phone started ringing, the reasonable thing to do would be to answer it. If I didn’t, you might rightly ask me why I didn’t answer it. I could give you one of several reasons: 1) I didn’t hear it ringing. 2) I didn’t want to answer at that time. 3) I didn’t want to talk to that person. 4) I didn’t want to hear what they had to say.

In Hebrews 3:1-2 it is said: “Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses was in all His house.” The writer goes on, urging us to have the faithfulness which will lead us into Christ’s rest.

It seems that a key to that action is that we answer our heavenly phone call [calling], listen to the heavenly One telling about our heavenly calling, and move on it. The result is not only a restful soul during the trip but joy at the end – Heb. 12:2.

27. The lamb to be offered for forgiveness of sins had to be closely examined for blemishes by those who were about to sacrifice it before it was sacrificed. The Lamb to be offered for forgiveness of our sins also had to be [and was] closely examined for blemishes by those who were about to sacrifice Him before He was sacrificed. As a matter of fact, He was examined three times and found without blemish every time -- John 18:38; 19:4, 6.

28. When Jesus died on the cross, the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. I suppose that if it had been torn from bottom to top it could have been said that two people tore it, each pulling against the other. But it was torn from top to bottom by God who, thereby, showed that He from above, not humans from below, had torn it, announcing that He had opened the way for us/anyone to approach Him in His heavenly temple directly without having to go through anyone else, such as a priesthood.

Moses had been with the Lord on the mount. When he came down, he had to place a veil over his face so the people could bear to look at him. Jesus’ body was the veil rent for us. He was the full manifestation of God, veiled in a body while He walked the earth. In His human body the Spirit of Earth’s creator was veiled so humans could look at Him.

29. If it is the gospel, it penetrates into the natural, so: “You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink” – Matt. 5:13. Well, that’s not exactly quoting Matthew 5:13, but if you give the horse salt he will then drink. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth. When people will not accept the message of Jesus Christ, our lives can salt them so that they will drink of the Living Water.

In honor of our Scot readers, I’ll quote George MacLeod [1895-1991], famous Scottish preacher, in one of his encouragements for believers to get out of the church [not to forsake the church, but to get out into the marketplace with their lives and testimony of Jesus]: “I simply argue that the cross should be raised in the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town’s garbage heap; at a crossroads, so cosmopolitan they had to write his title in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. At the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died. That is what He died for. And that is what He died about. And that is where church people ought to be, and what church people ought to be about.” Long live George MacLeod!

30. H. Jackson Brown, living American writer, said: “Let the refining and improving of your own life keep you so busy that you have little time to criticize others.” His approach to life is that simple things done in love will significantly change lives, and that most of us know what to do and how to do it.

That seems consistent with Paul’s self-evaluation. He said he had always known what to do because he knew God’s Law, but until he was born again he lacked the indwelling Spirit of Christ for righteous-being and enablement – Rom. 7.

31. Repetition in Scripture is there for strong accentuation, such as to say; “Be absolutely sure that you do it this way,” or “Get a really good grasp on this.” The Lord not only really means it, but He wants us to really believe it. When Jesus said, “Verily, verily, …” He was saying, “Now, listen up!”

Read Psalm 136 while hearing the Lord really emphasize it to you and while you apply yourself to really believing it.

32. When the Lord grants insightfulness of purpose or vision, and at least a portion of the group sees and accepts it, the remainder of the group has a decision to make, does it not? It may, 1) go along with the visionary group and be supportive or 2) refuse to be a part of the vision and its implementation.

Scripture provides a number of examples of responses to someone who sees the way better or deeper than others. Moses had the vision, but in the wilderness he had to deal with outright challenges by others in their unbelief and lack of vision. John the Baptist saw certain ones’ need of repentance who did not see their need. Jesus saw the Pharisees’ need of repentance, but they did not. The common problem in each case was that they were satisfied with their present condition [or, in Moses’ case, their previous condition back in Egypt].

It is common that those who do not see well will want to stay where/like they are. They are perhaps comfortable and are having their needs met, as they perceive their needs. They and their forefathers were in similar situations so why change that which is “normal?” Things were going well as they were. Why the need for change?

SIDE NOTE: God’s people had to be driven out of Egypt by various means. They were slaves [but they were accustomed to this “normal” condition], their workload had been increased [until it was impossible for them to complete it], they saw God’s and Egypt’s miracles [they saw the reality of their invisible, living God], they had dread of the Passover angel [thus they all wanted to be “saved” from God’s wrath], they were attracted by the promise of a 3-day celebration while playing with the jewels of Egypt [church picnics, prizes, work holidays], and the sea closed behind them [hardly possible to return to Egypt].

Recently I had occasion to speak a brief word to a group of pastors and non-pastor leaders in our city. It had to do with the overall condition of The Church. I described the church as being fractured and divided, and reminded them that the Lord said a house divided against itself would not stand – Matt. 12:25.

You know what some of their responses were. One pointed to successful ministries. Another pointed to a successfully mixed race congregation. These and other responses were kindly submitted, but all had the same purpose – “things are not so bad as they are.” There were others who caught the heavenly vision of what and how the church can be united in Jesus’ love, and how we are not even close to living in the fullness of that vision.

The consequence of that sort of response is more time in our wildernesses, perhaps until we die there while, some day, others go into the Land.

33. Have you noticed: No victory without a fight; no crown without a cross; no testimony without a test, no quenching of thirst without thirst; no bread without grinding grain; no forgiveness without repentance and confession; no patience without tribulation; no Life without death? There is a consistent pattern.

34. Paul and the Holy Spirit informed us in Ephesians 2:6 that He has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Those few words present us with some delightful information. First, in the process we are passive and God is active. He did it by His own choice and force of action and He is holding us in place. It is done.

Second, we are seated there in Christ. That’s now our residence, our residing place. Everything is “Yea and Amen” there in Christ. The battle is over and the victory is won. That’s the position of truth and power given us for the remainder of our fleeting life here on earth.

Third, we have entered into Christ’s rest if we know and believe the Lord. Jesus won the victory and we are more than victors because He has handed the finished product of His victory to us like victorious generals do to their kings. It is finished.

Fourth, and I’m not sure this Thought was meant to be put forth by that verse, is that we have been picked up and made to sit together. That gives me a picture of disobedient and divergent children being snatched up by a parent and plunked down on a chair together where they must sit until they learn to get along. That’s a godly parenting technique but I’m not sure it is meant to be taught in that verse.

The main Thought here is that when we are grasped by the powerful truth of that verse, our heavenly perspective will grow and our earthly perspective will diminish. For an Old Testament foreshadowing of that verse, check-out Joshua 10:8-25.

35. Russia sold ground-to-air missile systems to Syria a month or so ago; Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu made a quick trip to Moscow 2 weeks ago, telling Putin that Israel would not tolerate the delivery of the missile systems; Russia announced that the sale was delayed or canceled; but on the street the word is that the shipment is still a “GO.” Israel’s Defense Minister said today that Israel “knows what to do” if the shipment is delivered. He is understood to be referring to an air strike on the shipment.

[The next day, Netanyahu said: “We are anticipating a deterioration.” He did not elaborate.]

Israel’s neighboring countries are continually and actively at war with Israel and have no regard for their or Israel’s lives. I don’t believe that this is the situation in which Israel will nuke Damascus. That is unlikely to happen until Syria carries out some major attack against Israel that involves the loss of many Israeli lives, but Damascus will be destroyed and uninhabitable, per Old Testament prophecies that have yet to be fulfilled. The end is so close that Damascus’ demise must be very close.

36. If something is understood, accepted [believed], and acted upon, it is a result of either simple, good, human reasoning or a revelation from God. When Jesus told Peter: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven,” He spoke of those two ways of coming to an understanding – by the natural mind or by revelation from above. The first way comes from the Tree [large body of earthly derived Knowledge] that is available to all, through the use of which we make human-able decisions. The second way comes from a source outside of ourselves and is known as the Tree of Life. It comes from God through the working of the Holy Spirit.

We continually resource the Tree of Knowledge by the search and learn process. That’s good. But we cannot work or study to merit or obtain revelation from the Tree of Life. Far ahead of us, after the millennium, Christians will have a life full of only revelation. What a way to live. Adam will be greatly relieved.

37. Is a disciple of Christ someone who believes in the person and work of Jesus, works in the church, and has a moral life? While all of that is praiseworthy, as a definition it lacks one other ingredient. It lacks the testimony of entering into the experience of the cross as one’s own lifestyle. It lacks the experience of taking up one’s cross and following in Jesus’ footsteps.

 Jesus’ work on His cross is finished. He redeemed us. The work of our crosses on us is ongoing, leading to spiritual maturity through discipleship.

Keep your peace.