THOUGHTS OF JUNE, 2010

1. This may be a bit of a stretch, but I think it is a display of self-respect when we admit our errors/sins/weaknesses – and make amends when amends are called for. After all, mistakes are only errors in judgment, but to adhere to them and to present oneself as having not made the mistake shows a character flaw. Self-respect does not allow character flaw perpetuation, including those of our past.
2. This is a thought; only a partial look at living under the Law and laws. We are still under the moral Law of Moses which calls us to right living. That applies to believers and unbelievers. The better we do at living according to good laws and the Law, the better everyone is. Believers know that anyone who accomplishes even a high degree of obedience cannot lay claim to have attained to the righteousness that is found through faith in Christ Jesus. [I have long admired the Pharisees for their flesh-perfection, and stood aghast at their blindness.]

Living according to the ceremonial aspects of His Law is fine, too, if done for the enjoyment found in ceremonial purposes. But, that too does not give us the righteousness of Jesus.

Our righteous living certainly pleases the Lord [helping the needy, not murdering, etc.], as does our practicing ceremonial laws [the Lord’s Supper, Passover, etc.]but it is our faith in Jesus and His finished work as applied to us that is most pleasing to Him, changes us from the inside out, and gets things done that cannot be accomplished without that faith – no matter how much credit we may be due for being morally righteous.

Then, we are surrounded by additional laws [natural, legal, moral, cultural, etc.] which we need to obey. It is easy to begin living according to laws, to become law-focused, is it not? As an example, consider the many laws of the road for auto drivers. Certainly, I knew them from the beginning of my driving days, and [ordinarily!] obeyed them. After some time they became mostly an automatic control over my driving. I had “driving habits.”

Then something wonderful happened, to which I had to adjust. Under certain at least moderate emergency conditions every one of those driving laws was disposable or expandable at my discretion – I had become a doctor and occasionally had emergencies. Then I could drive according to the situation, being responsible for any good or bad effect that ensued from my informally-granted freedom. I experienced being freed from the law, but knew that I had personal responsibility in that freedom.

Over the years, while driving emergency-style, I was stopped occasionally by police, who immediately released me [some even escorted me] to continue on my way. I experienced grace, not officially written into the speed laws, but uniformly granted by the prevailing authorities.

The difference now since Jesus’ finished and completed work is that our Prevailing Authority has granted us grace to live under and outside His Law and our laws -- grace being defined as that which we must have in order to live under and fulfill the Law/laws – as did Jesus [Matt. 5:17-19].

Humanity was created to be free but we chose bondage and went to jail. Jesus re-freed us. Yet, we are bound in Him to live under the Law/laws as He did, the toughest one being to love our brothers as our selves [Mark 12:31]. Examples of fleshing out that toughest law are:

1. We are free to eat meat sacrificed to idols, but should not if we are in a situation where a weaker brother will think we are doing it as a form of worship of and submission to an idol [1 Cor. 8]. That admonition extends to much more than meat.
2. As sons of the Creator, we are free from taxation in any part of His creation/kingdom. However, lest we offend those of this world’s kingdom, we are to pay our taxes [Matt. 17:24-27].

Christians are called to peaceful existence with those of the world, meaning as much peace as is possible to accomplish on our part [Rom. 12:18]. We have variable ability [as the Lord grants us from event to event] to bring peace to others, but there are times when we appear to be the troublemakers, such as when: 1) the timing or direction of one of His commands puts us at variance with others, and 2) simply our righteous lives and life-styles are intolerable to others.

1. Remember that we are not to take undue credit for those things we do [Hosea 14]. Those may be peaceful, wonderful, prominent and successful in every way, or they may be the opposite in every way. Exactly like the Lord Jesus in His cross-walk, following the Spirit will lead to our being blessed and cursed by those around us. We may think we have failed when we are persecuted for righteousness sake, when it actually was God’s purpose for us to be persecuted, or martyred. On the other hand, we may think we ourselves have greatly succeeded when we are praised for some performance, when it actually was God working far beyond our actions to bring us to excellence and praiseworthiness.
2. God’s leaders are most often corrected by the Holy Spirit, not by anyone of humanity. That shows their maturity. Secondly, they are less often corrected by their spiritual peers. When they are corrected by their peers, that shows their love, and that they should be more sensitive to the Spirit’s corrections. Thirdly, they are corrected by their spiritual youngers. When that does happen, that shows their humility, but that they have not been listening to God’s first two choices. Fourthly, and hopefully much less often, they are corrected by those of the world. That’s regrettable, and shows that they are not part of a healthy local body of believers.

1. From the beginning, God’s process has been to bring all things together in Christ [Eph. 1:10]. It has been a process which will continue processing through this Church Age and into the Millennial Age. It will have been completed when we meet in the Heavenly Age.

During this present Age of the Church we of the church have the greatest blessing, in that it is more blessed to believe and obey by faith without temporal evidence than it is to believe because of some form of temporal evidence [John 20:29]. Part of that great blessing is that we are among those who are being stripped voluntarily [yielding to the Holy Spirit] of those many things that spot our pure white robes – that robe of Christ’s righteousness given to every born again person at the moment of our rebirth.

Also during this age, especially at the very end, in those years called the Great Tribulation, there will be a traumatic, involuntary stripping away involving everyone who and everything that is unfit to be brought into Him. That involuntarily stripping away process will proceed into at least the early part of the Millennial Age.

Eventually we and all whom He processed will go into heaven for that everlasting Heavenly Age. There will be no tag-alongs, no spotted robes, and no sadness. All at that time will have pure hearts and will see God, not meaning Jesus [Matt. 5:8]. That long earthly process will have been completed and all creation will have been brought together in Christ.

In the meantime, we have a lot of Life to live.

1. Are we qualified for our current job in the kingdom? Yes, No, Maybe.

In one sense, we are never qualified. Everything is over our heads, beyond us.

In another sense, He always qualifies us for that which he calls us.

In the “maybe” sense, we must apply ourselves to the work to become qualified [2 Tim. 2:15].

1. It’s a godly and practical piece of advice: When the Lord is leading you to do something new, when we are not experienced or are on new ground, hang back a bit instead of pushing ahead [Josh. 3:4]. If you are experienced or otherwise absolutely sure, or perhaps lagging behind too much, the word is “Onward, Christian Soldiers.”
2. Humor can be used properly, perhaps even godly. But, like everything else in creation, such as food and drink or driving or sleeping or money or authority, humor can be abused. At that point it becomes a drug that can appear to be very acceptable and even fashionable. It’s when it has become a drug [meaning we resort to it in an improper manner or at improper times and places] that we abuse it. It makes us and the situation shallow, although we may be the life of the party.
3. Character comes first. Many do not agree with that statement, believing that ability [getting the job done] comes first. It’s no surprise then, that that attitude has pressed itself into the church. After all, everyone in the church was first raised in the world, still lives as part of the world, and has some amount of worldliness in there in his soul with his predominantly Christian character.

Character is developed; reputation is earned. Fortunately, in those two important matters we are largely on our own. They are of the first necessity so it is good that we have to purchase and maintain them ourselves. They cannot be taken from us, although some may try and we may be tempted to think they have succeeded.

In situations or societies where character is [thought to be] less needed, such as in non-competitive societies [read that as “planned societies”], where rights and rules are the structure of social order, character becomes more scarce. Reputation also means less. It is the appointed man who comes to fix your broken T-V cable, not the long-trusted man who has earned the job by his character and reputation. If the stranger repairman doesn’t do a good job, or if he steals something from you, the company is bonded and sends someone else to do the job. Your confidence is in the process, not in any particular person of proven value.

But in the church, a well-developed character and earned reputation show themselves to be everything. There are those [all of us at least one time or another] who pale at the thought of being in that group of anointed, accomplished Christians who failed in their character development. See Matthew 7:21-23, which has everything to do with Christian character and nothing to do with our eternal salvation.

1. I have thought often, and mentioned it here several times, that when I read the account of the Lord’s passion I keep wishing that this time, in the natural, He would win. It must be that I’m experiencing those events as did John, Mary and others at the time. As if I am there real time, I don’t focus on the end results [although He did,] despite the eternal benefits provided to millions and the glory He received and gave to His Father.

But, General Patton said something that helps assuage my soulish problem. I can’t quote it exactly but it goes like this: “Don’t mourn the loss of a soldier’s life; instead, be thankful that he lived.”

1. It has been said, again by someone whom I do not recall, that “money received that is not earned sickens the culture of hard work and creative entrepreneurial activity through which people can truly find happiness.” Socialism does that to its culture. It is not surprising that the more socialism grips a culture, the less hardy is the fiber of that culture and the more it centers on that which each is due from the central finance institution.

That cannot go on without it entering the life of the church. Perhaps the problem began in the church and moved outward into the un-churched? In either case, the church begins to show the social problem; that is, the corporate owes the individual and the individual submits to and draws succor from the corporate. In that case the corporate [church, state] is the focus, not God, and the corporate produces it own children [Rev. 2:23 “her children”].

1. The Bible is like many textbooks in school; the answers are all in the back. Those answer pages, the Book of the Revelation, is the only book in the Bible that has the audacity to claim itself special. It says, “Read me. You will get a special blessing” [Rev. 1:3].
2. I continue looking for and finding basic, godly changes in Corpus Christi as the ground swell continues to manifest itself. Some gathered this week:
3. One church gathered 500 of its men on Saturday. They cleaned 3 city parks, making an obvious presence and difference.
4. In a City Council meeting a citizen spoke angrily to a certain councilmen, adding that he hated him. When that citizen left the meeting, another citizen approached him and gently pointed out his unrighteousness. He took the correction under advisement. In the next meeting, the ex-angry citizen chose to sit next to his new friend, and has since become a friend indeed. When he has stepped to the microphone and addressed the Council, he has been polite.
5. A month ago a national organization announced that Corpus Christi was the fattest city in America. The city took it to heart [instead of to stomach]. A city-backed Fitness Council was formed by citizens and over 1,000 have started in its fitness program.
6. The Superintendent of Corpus Christi Independent School District called a Civility Summit this week. About 70 civic, religion and education leaders were invitees. Their purpose is to bring civility back into the public schools. First actions are to start character training for the students and teachers; then parenting classes [with rewards] for the parents. Part of the target is to bring teacher authority back into the classroom.

THE CULTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS OVERTAKING THE CULTURE OF THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS.

1. When Jesus did not answer Pilate, who wanted Him to defend Himself, He was requiring Pilate to act upon the information he was already supplied with – plus character. Pilate already knew the truth about Jesus’ innocence and the evil nature and purpose of the crowd. He was not asking because he did not have enough evidence to satisfy him. In fact, if Jesus had simply defended Himself a bit, I’m convinced that Pilate would not have condemned Him. Pilate was looking for a way to exonerate Him. Thus, to fulfill Scripture and His Father’s command, it was necessary for Jesus to be silent in His defence.

How difficult it is for us to be silent, or at least to not respond defensively, when we are lied about or otherwise wronged.

There are times for either response.

1. When the early breaths of freedom began again in Poland in the 1980s, some Poles began putting a certain sign in their windows: “2+2=4.” Some were arrested and killed for simply displaying that sign. Why? Because the Pope had visited their communist, atheist country and proclaimed the necessity of knowing and living the truth, meaning most particularly that communism was a lie.

The movement of going public with “2+2=4” had begun. Everyone became truth-conscious, such as; knowing and saying exactly who were their enemies [their leaders, not the West], the primacy and privacy of families, God **is** alive, Radio Free Europe was right and their government-controlled news media was wrong, etc. That sign shouted loudly that truth was truth and had to be accurately applied to everything. No longer would they accept that 2+2=5 or 13 or 28 – or whatever the government said it was.

Please do not go to sleep during the following two paragraphs. They are for examples of the truth vs. lies in American society. The list could go for many pages. We have preferred to believe that 2+2=3 or 4 or 15 or whatever we wanted the answer to be. For example:

In America we do not believe 2+2=4. Our public schools have been failing for decades, despite our pouring money into the system. Our private schools have been succeeding for decades, despite their costs being a fraction of the public schools’ costs. Our public school system equals 27. Much is wrong.

We do not believe that 2+2=4 in our government-controlled financial system. Banks required those wanting to buy homes to qualify financially and to pay a certain amount down payment. The government forced the banks to lower those market-established proven standards, first lowering the qualifications to borrow, then lowering the down payment, then abolishing the down payment, then setting up a federal loan-insurance institution to take over failed loans from the lending banks, then subsidizing loan payments, then paying the payments – then [surprise!] the system failed and the whole system had to have a gigantic bail-out. Millions of people have lost and will lose their savings through higher taxes, government borrowing and inflation over the next several generations. Our government financial system equals 31.

Now back to the kingdom of heaven, the by-faith-only, here-and-now one that has been going on for about 2,000 years and which when the Lord returns will continue for 1,000 more years as He and His overcomers rule the world from Jerusalem. The Head of the church says 2+2=4. He said it with words and got it into print into our hands.

It is good that we call the Bible “God’s Word,” acknowledging that He is the One Who said: “One man plus one woman = one.” That’s good math. It takes care of most abortions, marriage, divorce, polygamy, homosexuality and most other forms of fornication. If you lengthen the bottom post of that plus sign a bit, it becomes a cross, which is Whom it takes and the route we too must take to live the truth.

1. Our 6-man interdenominational group of leaders, Catholic and Protestant, are developing what I will call courage. We have come together, are thinking outside of the past, we talk openly about more and more topics, and have a growing commitment to love one another without a personal reservation to split. When we have come sufficiently into accepting that God’s mathematical formula of 1+1+1+1+1+1=1 we will be ready to deal with “ministry.” I guess that math should be called “New Kingdom Math.”
2. You know how the Lord sensitizes our ears to hearing certain sounds or words. One of those for me is “I” and “we” in prayers. It does not happen only during prayers, but most of my attention is gathered in that setting. Examples: 1) “I [or ‘we’] ask you, Lord, ..” 2) In closing the prayer it is said; “I [or we] pray this in the name of …” The prayor’s focus is shown to be either individual or corporate. In my narrow and shallow experience, the Catholics [Roman, Anglican, Orthodox, etc.] say “we” and the Protestants say “I.”
3. How do you know, with assurance, that:
4. God loves you? [today’s answer] He has been tested sufficiently for my satisfaction.
5. Others love you? [today’s answer] They have been tested sufficiently for my satisfaction.
6. You love others? [today’s answer] We [I] have been tested sufficiently for my satisfaction.

It helps to see that tests are necessary parts of testimony. We have no testimony without adequate testings. If the test and our response is shallow or flimsy, not much assurance is imparted. If it is deep and substantial, others will place great weight, perhaps their lives, upon your testimony.

1. Back to the world’s kingdom and Christ’s kingdom governments. The world’s governments are failing. They scurry about, applying patches here and there. They join together [E.U.] but soon find the same problems facing the larger group. There is no repentance and no turning to God’s ways.

As humans, we are yet bound to this world with its own prince and principalities and powers. We are not in a vacuum, spiritually or otherwise. We have to deal with world and spiritual and flesh personalities and events.

On the other hand, the government of Christ’s kingdom is arising. We are finding that it is not enough to know His ways, nor even enough to live righteously personally. The dedicated soldier on the battlefield must be more than an excellent soldier -- he must be coordinated and controlled. There must be an order and he must be part of it.

Like Jesus was a [although] one man army He was fully under command of His Father. It is time for more than “only the Lord” reigning in each one of us. Our individual annointings are not sufficient. We are being put into order for the fulfillment of God’s government on earth.

I wonder if Jesus will judge us qualified to be overcomers and to assume positions of responsibility and authority in the Millennium if we have not done so here on earth when His timely, well-planned and obvious situations call for it.

1. In Munich in 1972 at the Olympics, Lasse Viren of Finland was running in the men’s 10,000 meter race, competing for the gold medal. Halfway through the race, Viren got tangled up with another runner and both of them fell to the ground. The pack of runners continued on, leaving the two hopelessly far behind. Somehow both men got back up and tried to continue.

The other runner quickly realized he would never catch up to the rest of the group. He quit the race in despair, his Olympic dreams shattered. The announcers were commenting about how unfortunate it was for both runners to come this far and then lose the race due to an unfortunate accident.

But they spoke too soon. Lasse Viren kept running. And running. And running. Not only did he make up all the ground he lost, but he moved from dead last into first place and won the gold medal – and set a new world record, by a wide margin, with ease, with grace, and with a huge smile on his face.

So, when you feel like quitting, remember Jesus and Lasse Viren. Get up, keep running, finish the race!

1. The highest recorded wind during a Texas hurricane was in 1970 when Hurricane Celia hit Corpus Christi with winds of 161 mph.

A group of bandits raided the State of Texas treasury in Austin on June 11, 1865. A group of angry citizens drove them away. For their efforts the bandits took $17,000.

1. Judicial blindness is the Lord’s solution to man’s extreme blindness. When someone [or group or nation] refuses to acknowledge what God has made visible to them, He removes even the limited sight that they had to begin with. His judgment takes away even their partial vision. They are rendered completely blind [Rom. 1:16-32].

Consider the Pharisees. They longed for the coming of their Messiah. In addition to the words of their biblical prophets, they had the extra-biblical writings of their rabbis, who wrote for hundreds of years about how to recognize Him when He came. Above all, they spoke of the three signs that would manifest themselves in the presence of the true Messiah: 1) He would be able to cleanse the leper, 2) He would cast out the dumb demon, and 3) He would restore sight to the man born blind. Jesus fulfilled those signs more than once, yet the spiritual leaders of Israel pressed Him for more.

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry He spoke openly and plainly to them. When they began to explain away His miracles, He began to speak in the obscure language of parables so they would not understand anything He said [Matt. 1310-11]. Those whose minds were not contaminated with religious bias either understood or wanted to understand. But the Pharisees became completely deprived of truth. Jesus described their condition as blindness, and He proclaimed those eight woes upon them found in Matthew 23. Five times in that chapter He refers to them as “blind.”

On the other hand, we Gentiles had and still have a different route to our blindness. We attribute the obvious wonders of God in the natural world to concocted theories of their coming into existence by themselves.

In either case, spiritual blindness to the obvious resulted in the same thing – the disappearance of common sense. Ultimately, that which was common [sense] became uncommon. That left us open to the lusts of the flesh, conflicting desires, self-justification, invented religions [including the worship of nature (which instead was designed to reveal the real God) and the worship of man], which has left us minds without biblical reality. We are possessed by insane minds with more wisdom than God has.

The Lord foresaw this when He said: “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” [2 Tim. 3:1]. “Perilous times” means “ragingly insane,” or “outrageous.”

The next time you hear some political news that stimulates you to say, “That’s crazy,” you may be right. It might be the result of moral blindness.

1. To trust someone commonly means we expect to get something in return for our trust. Our desire or need is important, so our trust is based upon that person’s or company’s proven record –their ability to deliver according to their guarantee [word, past performance, resources]. Having their signed contract in-hand is important. My point here is that our common but shallow description of what trust “should be” can be improved, or the results can be disappointing.

You knew that I was going to apply this to trusting the Lord, didn’t you. The only way to trust Him is to trust Him no matter what happens, whether we get something from Him or not [Job 13:15]. We know what He can do, and we may have some idea about what He might do, but most of all we know what we want Him to do. We ask and don’t get the answer we hoped for – which does not disturb our trust. He always delivers the perfect answer, loaded with grace for accomplishing His purpose.

1. Returning to the end-results of discipleship, which are: 1) we are more pleasing and helpful to the Lord, 2) we have developed godly character, 3) we reign with Him here on this earth in Jerusalem during the millennium for 1,000 years, and …………..

Before going further, let’s talk about those 3. First, there is more for the believer than being loved by God, being born again, staying out of trouble, and going to heaven some day. Wow! Don’t we wish that more of us at least fit that description of a believer! But, if we did only those good things we would leave this life as still spiritual babes, not prepared for that which is ahead – the authority and responsibility of ruling with Jesus in His kingdom.

Secondly, godly character has more to it than being good. Even a short look at Jesus’ life shows us that He was also integrated, consistent, learned, spiritually in tune with His Father, and knew how to lay aside His self will. Turning our decisions over to the Lord is the process that develops Christ-likeness in us.

Thirdly, He was “on top of” His every situation, although He did not control His every situation. He guarded His life by escaping from threatening situations and eventually intentionally laid down His life – per His Father’ instructions. He served His Father’s purposes in order to overcome, and then to become ruler of all.

Discipleship is the route toward being labeled “overcomer” by the Lord Jesus at His judgment seat [between the time of the rapture and His return to earth seven years later]. When we talk of overcomers, we are talking about Christians who are faithful and obedient, who do not only talk about doing the will of God, but who actually do it. However, remember this; overcomers are not perfect or religious or good. They are not a special class of people who have it all together. We are talking about those believers who simply recognize their choices, agree with God about them, and then choose to go God’s way.

The word “overcomer” in Greek means “one who has victory over hostile powers.” The teaching and testimony of Scripture is that Jesus and we must endure hostility and have victory through that which we endure if we are to become what we need to be in order to qualify for reigning with Him. Enduring or suffering is the result of denying ourselves and choosing to follow Jesus. Perhaps you too have noticed that when you stop yourself from following after what you want, it hurts and you suffer [Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12].

In addition to suffering, we must be faithful [Matt.24:45-47] and love Him [Jam. 2:5] if we are to be heirs of the kingdom [rule over all His goods]. I know that you already grasp this point, but if others need more evidence, refer them to Rev. 2:7, 11, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 19:7-9; Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26; 12:47; Romans 2:1-16; 14:10-23; 1 Corinthians 3:13; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; James 1:12; 1 John 4:17.

There is a difference between simply entering the Millennial Kingdom as a subject [as all believers will do] and being qualified to inherit the position and responsibility of a “sovereign” there. Our life here and now in the invisible kingdom is the training and qualifying ground. Many of us have never been taught how to become an overcomer, while others simply do not want to give up our fleshly ways to follow the Lord wholeheartedly.

Now, having dealt with the purpose and results of discipleship, becoming overcomers and reigning with Jesus for 1,000 years, why don’t you go further than the millennium. Read Revelation 20:7 through 22:6.

1. Thomas Paine said: “The trade of governing has always been monopolized by the most ignorant and the most rascally individuals of mankind.” God’s governors are and will be different.
2. Humor is like shame; it can be healthy [briefly] or toxic [chronically]. It can be used if well-focused, or it can be distractive. It can cover up pain that should be dealt with other ways, such as with openness and honesty.
3. Have you noticed that Jeremiah in 15:19 says something that can help us unify with those of other religious and political and etc. beliefs, without abandoning the truth? He said, “.. if you extract the precious from the worthless, you will become My spokesman [‘as my mouth’].” I see that as an encouragement to get with usual opponents, sort out their good stuff from their bad stuff, and relate and function on the good stuff level [Rom. 14:19; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:14].

I have a beloved brother, a pastor, who says, “But they believe ….” when I suggest that the Lord wants us to establish fellowship [brotherly amity] with certain other mainline Christian groups. At this point in his life, he cannot adequately sort out the good stuff from the bad.

Everything that is seen “a certain way” is probably worthless, meaning that it is our way and not the Lord’s . Our imagined truth can be destructive of unity, for which we are held responsible. The real truth will divide us enough, without our various brands of truth being held to the extent of dividing us further.

1. I have another beloved and anointed brother who has a much shorter temper than he should, and has an easy tendency to be critical. I think I know where the burr is under his blanket. He is dissatisfied with himself because he thinks he has not yet responded to the Lord as he should. Bad feelings about oneself is a common reason to “lay it on” others, usually in the same area as we are laying it on ourselves possibly subconsciously.
2. The Hispanic pastor who is one of the leaders in that which the Lord is doing here in Corpus Christi has a good report. For many generations there has been a major division between “Mexicans and Texans.” Historically the cause has been that the Republic of Texas, and then the United States, took that which is now the Southwest United States from Mexico, then mistreated the Mexicans who lived therein.

There is now an excellent integration of the two groups. But old hurts hang on for generations. When the Lord began to do what He said He would do in Corpus Christi, He said He was going to treat all of Corpus Christi as one parish. That means Catholic and Protestant, black and white and brown, etc.

Over recent years, there had been efforts to establish better fellowship between the Hispanics [here usually referred to as Latinos] and the Caucasians. They all failed due to at least the perception that the Caucasians dominated the Latinos. That perception was probably true, particularly if one had been sensitized to Caucasian domination.

But now our Latino leader is spreading the news that God’s new thing at this time in Corpus Christi is based on love and trust. With that truth being lived, and spoken, it is being seen and acknowledged by the Latino pastors.

God is good!

1. The greatest [righteous] fulfillment a Christian can experience is in being a son or daughter who knows he lives in the very presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. To experience that to a great measure requires the loss of the common self-focus and of the desire to be a somebody. I’m talking about the satisfied heart that is totally occupied with the Lord, eyes fixed on Jesus and delighted in His presence.

The amount of time and the depth we live conscious of that fact greatly influences/impacts our entire life.

1. “All people occasionally stumble across the truth, but most pick themselves up and continue as if nothing happened.” Winston Churchill
2. Anything you get that comes not from intimacy will not transform you. It is only entertainment.
3. In Luke 16, the story of the unrighteous steward, the Lord is saying that we are to properly use our temporal life and possessions in the light of eternal purposes. If dishonest people use all of their ingenuity to promote their material welfare, so ought God’s people use their energies to further their spiritual welfare.

A good definition of “mammon” is that it means any compensation other than the Lord.

1. It’s a little thing, but it has a richness to it. In Luke 22:19 there is the obscure phrase, “.. when He had given thanks, ..” Have you wondered what His prayer of thanksgiving was? It was not necessary to record the prayer because that blessing was common, especially among the Jews. It goes like this, “Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.” It is the same blessing the Jews bless their bread with today. As I said, it’s a little thing, but rich.
2. Yes, we are responsible for being good seed and for planting good seed and for watching over the seeds which we have planted in order for a good crop to come to harvest. However, and I do mean “however,” there is a process at work with and aside from us. That process is the working of the Holy Spirit. We can cast the seed but we cannot make it grow. If the Lord does not water it, give Son light and times of darkness, it will not grow. I think that the point of Mark 4:26-29 is that we do not have control over the results of our seed-planting. In fact, we have little control over the results of the seed within ourselves. Without the Lord’s direct oversight and abundant grace, we would wither at best.
3. Here is a principle that is more sure than gravity: “The meek are blessed, for they will inherit the earth” [Matt. 5:5]. That inheritance has its fulfillment in the Millennium for most inheritors. In the meantime, the meek in Christ live by that promise. It makes them strong in their weakness. The proud and self-fulfilling do not inherit anything from Him, even though it may look like they [we, I] have inherited from Him. We can look at our abundance of earth-stuff [authority, abilities, possessions] and thank Him for our “inheritance.” You are welcomed to join me in doing an inheritance reassessment.
4. I am told that “joy” is described two ways in Scripture. One is “exuberant praise,” and the other is “quiet delight.” If so, that should be of great help when discussing whether those quiet worshippers have the joy of the Lord, or whether it is possessed only by those exuberant ones.
5. The Wycliffe Bible Translators report that by 2025 all of the world’s 6,909 spoken languages will have at least part of the Bible in printed form. God bless those humble, faithful translators [both native and first world].
6. Noah’s ark landed on the very same day of the Hebrew calendar that Jesus arose from the dead, but about 3,000 years later.
7. Groups of scientists have offered the following: During the flood, the vast amounts of water needed to cover the earth came mostly from subterranean caverns, and much less from the sky. Those caverns then collapsed so that the waters receded into what are now our deep ocean basins. As the water receded from the land that did not collapse [or collapsed less] mountains “rose up” or rose higher, leaving on them those well-known mountain top sediments that perplex some of us who are biblically unlearned or unbelieving.
8. Don’t forget to include Psalm 104 in the stories of creation. There are three stories of creation in the early chapters of Genesis.
9. There is a lot to apply to our lives out of Micah 7:1-8.

V. 1 – Micah sees the situation as it is and it included himself, without spin.

V. 2 – And it gets worse the more he looks at it.

V. 3 – Hand over fist, the evil abounds. The prince and the judge take bribes. Big shots look after themselves. The whole fabric of society is woven with corruption.

V. 4 – And things are going to get worse.

V. 5 – Then, considering the circumstances, he gives some good advice: “Don’t be loose lipped around your friends, neighbors or wife.”

V. 6 – You cannot trust anyone; not even your family! We have seen that during our times, and still see it. The state turns children against their parents, after parents have turned to the state to raise their children.

V. 7-8 – Then, after sizing up the situation accurately, Micah give the final report: “But no matter how bad things get, the Lord hears my voice and will lead me onward.”

Those are the verses that especially spoke to me today.

1. What is shown of a person’s character when they do not use every reasonable means to lessen their trials? It shows that they have accepted Jesus’ calling, to focus on being ministers instead of being ministered to. I’m talking about more than when He was on the cross when He could have called on thousands of angels who were standing by to get Him out of that situation. He was not “get me out of my problems” oriented.

There were many times when things were not going well, when He could have altered the situation. Another example occurred during His wilderness temptation. He was weak, hungry and thirsty, but refused to do what was reasonable to have a simple meal of bread. I can hear Him saying; “It’s not about Me.” It wasn’t about His needs or His getting what He deserved out of even that small part of life. Instead, He came to serve, not to be served.

I think that we need to see God’s purposes when we are in our trials. He has eternal purposes for everything that comes our way, not only an eternal purpose for the big things and for our lives overall. Job knew that.

1. If all of earth’s land masses were leveled into the oceans/seas, there would then be 2 miles of water covering the earth.

If earth’s glaciers and ice caps were all to melt, the ocean levels would rise 40 meters. That would cause a major relocation of populations and productions.

Earth’s atmosphere holds about 2 inches of precipitable water. That’s not much. It is continually being replenished, of course.

1. Self-control, one of the fruit of the Spirit, is almost never learned/gained one-on-One, meaning one person and the Lord. If it is learned that way, it will require at best an unnecessarily long and painful and destructive [to others] process.

The alternative and the best way to come into self-control is by one-on-one, meaning one person and another one person. That should start in childhood with the child and parents. It then enlarges into a family event and spreads to others in society, like neighbors, relatives, school and job relationships, etc.

If self-control is not learned in that natural way, it may [by God’s abundant grace] be learned with one adult and another one adult. That is a rare and precious event because the adult learner, unlike the child who is under unavoidable compulsion, at any time can elect to reject the humility needed for self-control to be learned. A common exception here is during incarceration. Many un-self-disciplined adults learn self-control in prison, thank the Lord!

1. There is a common method for leading someone to the Lord – by telling them to invite Jesus into their hearts and they will be saved [a man-made doctrine not found in the Bible]. I am interested in what you think of the following, which has to do with true faith.

Let’s start with a question: “Why did the Lord Jesus have to die on the cross?” Weak answer: “To save us.” Follow-up question: “To save us from what?” Weak answer No. 2: “From hell.” Strong answer: “To save us from the wrath of God which we deserved and were sure to get.” Weak argument: “But, isn’t God all-loving, kind, and full of grace and mercy?” Answer: “Yes; that’s why He sent His Son Jesus to take the fullness of His wrath upon Himself on the cross, off of those who repent and turn their lives over to Him.”

You have your own observations, but mine is that the most common thing that follows the simple invitation for Jesus to enter hearts, is unchanged lives. Raising their hands and invited the Lord into their hearts so commonly does not result in being born again.

Fleeing to Jesus for salvation from identified, confessed sin and deserved wrath results in a selfless new life that loves the Lord and His family.

1. What is faith? Our definitions can wander into the land of legalism or of fantasy. Pick your own definition from this list:
2. One’s own affirmative act.
3. Something that one must do or have in sufficient measure for God to answer prayer.
4. A commodity to be quantified or assessed [too much of it and we run the risk of dashing our misplaced hopes and dreams; too little and our account may prove insufficient to convince God to do what we ask].
5. Hope in a possibility detached from reality – the idea that despite what my mind and heart tell me is true, if I believe in the opposite with enough strength and force of will, the objects of my imagination will be given life.

What all of those views of faith do is mislead us into accepting that faith is something we muster up. That would mean that we are the object of our faith; in fact, chosen by God to be so.

There is only one object of faith – the Lord on His throne. Faith is understanding and embracing the ultimate reality – a sovereign, all-mighty God Who loves us passionately and has embraced His redemptive process fiercely on our behalf. He has conquered sin and death by a love for His people [that’s you and that’s me] and by the obedience of His Son, Jesus. Faith is the certainty that, while all things [and my particular thing] are not now as they should be, there will come a day when all will be made right. And, that day may be today.

Faith is facing the uncertainty of today’s circumstances from the perspective of tomorrow’s truth. That’s assurance and conviction. In the end, it’s all we have and all we need.

1. Expect a change in your personality after you have [again!!] successfully completed a[-nother!!] and unexpected trip through loneliness/emptiness/dryness. Those trips may last a few hours, a few days, or a few weeks. I cannot testify to any lasting more than a few weeks. Those times are real changers of one’s personality, leaving us more solid vs. variable, more sober vs. silly, and more reliable vs. changeable.

Those times also spoil us from things that had been God-given and God-anointed. Those former people, places and things become “things of the world” to us, and more eternal-quality things enter our lives. The old things no longer attract us or edify us. When we try to relate to or use them, they no longer edify others. We have been separated from them and joined more to the Lord in our walk.

That process is repeated many times in our lives. Sometimes we may not notice it, but go through it successfully anyway. Other times, perhaps in our ignorance, we may reject the grace given for successfully [ordinarily meaning “peacefully”] completing the process and growing in spiritual maturity, reliability and intimacy with the Lord and our brothers.

1. If you have been wondering who is that man, Saul Alinsky, under whom President Obama sat and absorbed teachings while a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago, here is an informative list:
2. He is known as the father of modern “community organizing.”
3. He stated that corruption empowers, so ...
4. … social action works best in the presence of generated conflict.
5. Everybody bands together and confronts the “oppressors,” meaning whomever the organizers decide are doing whatever is oppression.
6. He could never get past the sins of America.
7. He did not believe that America’s founding principles or leaders had any uniqueness or exceptional qualities.
8. He called upon America to apologize to the world for all its “sinful actions.”

If you want more, read Alinsky’s “Rules for Radicals.” Then, if you want the truth about community organizing, read Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Paul. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.

1. Until next time, let’s continue with the Lord.