THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2020

1. As time continues, all manner of things may happen. “Happen” is not the best choice of words here, because “happen” rightly includes things resulting from deliberate purpose, plus those thought to be from “chance,” of which there are none. Remember Proverb 16:33; Luke 12:7; Eph. 1:11, etc.

From the position up here at age 90 years, I will presume to offer you a word of clarity from out of the clouds circling the top of this mountaintop on which I sit -- all things that happen are actually, completely and perfectly designed by God, and for our betterment. Whether they result in our betterment or not is partly dependent on us, because the betterment results are for those who love Him and are yielding our lives to Him, although always imperfectly – Rom. 8:28.

So, therefore, do not lose heart in any affliction, including those associated with aging, as your outer man or woman is decaying, because your inner man or woman is still being renewed day by day – 2 Cor. 4:16. Those words are as true today as when we first read them as youths, that we who are in Him have already obtained our eternal inheritance [it’s being held in the bank], since it had been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will. God has called us, He will not fail.

1. Thankfully, old dogs do learn new things. A. L. supplies us with another of his always fresh testimonies. He read Romans 15:15-16, which says that Paul was a minister from God to the Gentiles, a priest sanctified by the Holy Spirit to offer up the Gentiles as an offering to God. That’s good! I knew that every believer was to offer himself up as a sacrifice, but not that Paul [and others] was in the spiritual priestly position to offer others as sacrifices.

It’s a new and blessed thought that we may perform that priestly duty for one another. Abraham was credited for doing it for his son Isaac, our Father in heaven did it for His Son Jesus, Paul did it for his children those Gentiles, and we do it for each of our spiritual children. What a reward for our being proper sheep food – sheep food being the life of the shepherd for their sheep.

1. Are you satisfied with your understanding of God’s ultimate purpose for you and His creation? That understanding is one of the things that grows and grows as the spirit of revelation works within us. God’s ultimate expression comes as the kingdom of God, with the person of King Jesus at the center. Everything God has done, is doing, and will do is centered on the Person, Jesus. It is God’s will that that king and that kingdom fill all things and constantly increase. That is personal and universal. I’m not satisfied, yet, with my grasp on that picture but it gets better the further I go.
2. “Whosoever will to the Lord may come” seems to be an open invitation but it has certain requirements. We must come as a child or we will get nowhere – Luke 18:17. We must be changed in order to enter the Lord’s kingdom, and we are changed after we enter it [if we want power we must accept weakness, if we want to rule we must suffer, if we want life we must give up our life]. There are many and total requirements for coming, entering and receiving in the kingdom, but “whosoever will” is an open invitation to come meet the Lord Jesus at the Gate.
3. To impute to someone means to designate or reckon any action or word or thing to a person. Adam’s sin was imputed to all his descendants, Jesus’ righteousness is imputed to all of Adam’s descendants who believe into Jesus, and our sins are imputed to Christ Jesus when we believe into Him. He accepts the responsibility for answering the demands of justice for our sins. We are free! Hallelujah!!!
4. Of course, you want to have fellowship with other Christians. I do, too. So, look at the depth and breadth and frequency of your fellowship with Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists, Pentecostals, et al. How does it look? Give a grade to it. Does it agree with the Lord’s grade? This will help: “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another” – 1 John 1:7. Not, “We can have.” Not, “Sometimes we have.” Not, “We have it in our hearts but don’t have to live in it.” But, “We have it.” Do yourself a favor that will change the quality of your eternity – visit a congregation of a supposedly very different denomination, love those people, and there worship the Lord. Experiencing the lordship of Christ in that situation is edifying.
5. There are little hints in scripture that show what sort of world will exist during the millennium. One example, of there still being many nations in the kingdom of Christ, is found in Revelation 11:15, which reads, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord God and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.” Notice the plurality of kingdoms. Also, we will have rain, which will still be directed by the Lord as to off or on, and here or there. In Zechariah 14:16-19 it is reported that no rain will fall on those nations whose leaders will refuse to report to King Jesus in Jerusalem at their appointed times. The Lord is powerfully and gently persuasive.
6. This life is not for the body but for the soul. Even as Christians, we too often choose the body over the soul when there is a big difference. That was not a quote from the Bible. But Jesus did say, “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” – Matt. 10:28. We must care for the body, but not at expense to the soul. I wish I had a fresh, clear testimony on that.
7. “.. God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart” – 2 Chron. 32:31(b). It seems to me that the test was to let Hezekiah know what was in his own heart, but the way the verse reads, it was to let the Lord know what was in Hezekiah’s heart. The same thing is working in Deuteronomy 8:16 which reads, “In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you to do good for you in the end.” In either case, He puts us in difficult or lonely places to work on our souls for eternal purposes. At age 90, this is the first time I have ever lived alone. Life is good, but not the same sort of good as it was with a Proverb 31:10-31 wife. God is able.
8. The test of how disciplined our children are is not how much we enjoy living with them, but how much others enjoy being with them.
9. I am pleased to include another of A. H.’s contributions:

“At the end of World War l, the defeated German nation tried to negotiate an acceptable surrender agreement with the victors, who would have none of it. They were settling for nothing short of unconditional and total surrender. The defeated nations were forced to accept all the demands of the victors, which included punitive reparations, which more or less ruined the German economy for many years. Interestingly, this almost certainly contributed to the rise of Hitler and World War ll. [NOTE: Thankfully, the Lord does not work that way with us. When we admit defeat, confess our sins, and give up, He forgives us, cleanses us, and sets us back on our feet. There may be some restitution, if we are able. There had to be consequences to the unrighteous actions of the victors of WW I. After WW II the vanquished were treated very differently – ed.]

“When we first come to the Lord, not well-knowing Him and His ways, many expect a peace agreement or an alliance. We are proud of our ‘good bits’ and talents. We expect that any ‘reasonable’ God would enjoy our cooperation, that He would want to strike up an alliance with us and reward us for contributing our good deeds to His program. We would enter into a lifetime of negotiations with the Almighty trying to convince Him to do things our way, to add His ‘power’ to our ‘ideas.’ We present to Him our intelligence, speaking skills, musical talents – to mention a few. We are keen to use these to advance God’s kingdom. We are proud of our achievements and can even look down on those in the church who are less well endowed.

“But when we come to the Lord, He does not want an alliance. He wants total, unconditional surrender from every one of His born-again children – not ‘me and Him,’ only Him. He does not listen to our attempts at negotiation and logical ideas. He wants us to give up all of our ‘good stuff’ and live day by day as an empty vessel which, of itself, is worthless. This means that all of His children start from the same baseline – empty. If we do, He can and will fill it with Himself to overflowing which will abundantly supply all our needs with plenty to pour out to a thirsty world. If we don’t, we stumble along tying harder and harder to please God with our ‘good stuff,’ while He appears quite distant much of the time.

“We have been rescued from slavery to sin [self] into freedom in righteousness [Jesus]. Hallelujah! Jesus has set us free indeed, which requires unconditional surrender. He will enslave us to righteousness. Our flesh says, ‘That’s not the deal I had in mind! I don’t want to be a slave. I want to have a say in what goes on in my life.’ The bad news is that indeed we can have a say in what goes on in our lives, and that the church is filled with such.

“Let us therefore not attempt to do a deal with the Lord, but rather surrender to His will with open ears and willing hearts, empty before Him, ready to be filled with His fullness, totally dependent on the Holy Spirit hour by hour, knowing every day that we have nothing of value in ourselves and are everything of worth in Him.”

Thank you, A. H. That is well said, as always.

1. I think this little Thought is one designed to keep teachers/parents/preachers honest. It says, “We don’t know anything until we are doing it.”
2. What does the Lord want? He wants us to listen to Him, because He speaks. He leads, so He want us to follow. He is the Truth, so He want us to follow Him in the Truth. He is the Son of God, so He wants us to be sons of God. He behaved like His Father, so He wants us to behave like our Father. In short, He wants us to be like He was and is, and to become exactly like He is. We are certainly involved in that process, but He is the workman and we are His material.
3. I have an opinion, and I want to share it with you. My opinion is that the church bears little resemblance to the church Jesus personally lived, that He taught about, that He died for to bring into existence, that the Holy Spirit anointed, that the apostles lived, that the Spirit has set afire many times in these 2,000 years, and that He will soon be coming back for. That church is painted in blood-red on every page of the New Testament, and on many pages of the Old Testament, but few believers have seen it, at least for their personal acceptance. Despite it’s being labeled by God Himself as, “the Body of Christ” [and God cannot lie, so it must be Christ’s Body in more than title!], it bears little resemblance to Christ. The church is not like Christ [but should be], but is mostly about Christ. That is my point.

What a disconnect! Instead of our being united, living, breathing as one in Jesus Christ, we are more like card-carrying members who want to be blessed by virtue of our cards, with greatly limited commitment and co-functionality – instead of our being united in full-life immersion. We are divided, isolated, self-centered, self-involved, discordant examples of iniquity [iniquity here means being given over to our own needs, ways and means]. But we are not irreparable; we are fixable.

Let’s take a breath to see how our attitudes are holding up, whether we are being defensive, offended, agreeable, or whatever. I have been on the other side, the up-side, a member of a local Body of Christ that lived to do only what our Father wanted, to say only what He said, and to be Christ individually and corporately at whatever the cost – in fact, the higher the cost, the better. We were noted around the Christian world as either ignorant Bible-believing radicals, or as the living Body of Christ where Jesus’ character and power could be seen and received, and where the mind of Christ was consistently revealed and spoken by believers and the Holy Spirit.

Consider the mind of Christ in Jesus of Nazareth. His was a natural human mind entirely and continually given over to God, voluntarily and unhurriedly, from birth to death as much as His human mentation from childhood to adulthood permitted. That mind, Jesus’ mind, was not the mind of God. God’s mind knows all things all of the time and is very willing to share much of itself with other humble minds whether human or angelic. Jesus’ mind was exactly that, a human mind that was committed to God’s will in His life, and submitted accordingly. All born-again Christians are offered the same, individually and corporately. The most highly functional definition of the mind of Christ as it applies to the church is that it is the corporate mind of any unit of believers who are entirely given over to God, and it is equal to Christ’s mind. That is why God calls it the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:16 reads; “For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he [any person] should instruct Him [God]? But we have the mind of Christ.” Individual Christians should often be able to discern aspects of God’s mind, but are offered the more essential and accurate mind of Christ when it is corporately discerned. That is “the mind of Christ,” the fallible [able to fail] mind of men completely given over to God’s will and trusting in God’s grace [to direct, provide, correct, etc.].

Christ came into the world to create a unit of people whose being and function would be completely in Him. Thus, wherever two or more are gathered in Him as Christ [and this is the key -- more on this later], He is with them in ways differently and more powerfully than when each one stands before God and man in his own individuality. The church in Jerusalem, with Jesus’ brother, James, functioning as its leader, provides us with a good picture of Christ’s mind among brothers in a body – Acts 15:25 [13-33].

Jesus was fully a human, being the son of a human, Mary, who had been impregnated by God. That made Him the son of man, a human. As such, He had nothing going in His favor that the Church does not have. In other words, the church is offered everything that Jesus had because we, too, are sons of God and corporately are Jesus’ body.

Then He said: “As I was sent, I send you,” meaning 1) He was sent by His heavenly Father, so we are sent by our heavenly Brother, and 2) as He was spiritually equipped for His earthly assignment, so we also are spiritually equipped for our earthly assignment. In order to redeem humanity by the things He did, He had to be a heavenly equipped human. In like manner, in order for the church to be God’s instrument toward the redemption of humanity we must be heavenly equipped humans.

As Son of God He laid aside everything He had from before time began, except His identity. Keeping His identity as Son of God, and not having an earthly father, meant that he was untainted of the sin nature that Adam had brought upon humanity. By keeping His identity as Son of God, He did not have to be born again to become God’s son – as all other humans must. In order to redeem humanity by the things He did He had to be fully God’s Son, a condition that would also be granted to humans when we would be reborn into God’s family.

Being Son of God and son of man made Him acceptable for being our sin offering. The redemptive offering for humanity had to be both perfect and human. He was. Christians are humans who have received God’s Holy Spirit, making us sons of God in our human flesh. Now we are acceptable to God to offer ourselves to Him as living sacrifices.

Jesus Christ did not have the full mind of God residing in Him. God’s mind was one of the things He had to give up to become fully human. Then, to know God’s mind as much as He needed to know it, He had to seek it, as we must. He knew only that part of God’s mind which was made known to Him from time to time by His Father, which depended upon His faithful, steady submission to His Father’s will. That is true of us, also.

Jesus had already told them that He did not know everything that God knew [Matt. 24:36]. Apparently, they were not surprised. Then He told them they too would not know everything. That really did not surprise them. He told them that soon the Holy Spirit would come upon them, making them adequate witnesses to Him [His claims and character] and giving them power [God’s power]. Indeed, power came upon them – for 1) speaking out [with soul-changing effect into their listeners], 2) promising things of God to believers [prophesying], 3) the development of Christian life and unity [a corporate life among believers, so obviously like Him that they would be visually seen as and called “bodies of Jesus’ believers who were like Him,” or “Christ’s Body”], and 4) for evangelism [having a testimony and showing it in truth and power]. In short, the Holy Spirit coming upon them delivered them and delivers us from our iniquity – meaning from going our own way, from living our own lives, so they and we could be the Body of Christ, recognizable units of Christlike people. It’s in the Book.

Now for some reflections on “the Mind of Christ” as granted in the Body of Christ from my personal experience in the years since my rebirth in 1964. I will be bragging, but hopefully only on the Lord, so prayerfully remember that.

1. When the Lord granted Acts chapter two to me, and to four other men and our families, we became fixed on following the Lord **more than whether a thing fit in with our already well-established life plans, or if it was acceptable to our peers**. We trusted Him, He lived among us, we believed Him for whatever He said, and He did whatever we asked because we were in step with what He was thinking and doing. Instead of trying to get Him to support what we wanted, knowing that He would communicate with us, we asked [then watched and listened] and did what He wanted.
2. We moved near one another from other towns into what was a run-down neighborhood, left our jobs and accepted others that usually paid much less so we and our families could be together every day, and received ridicule and rejection from family, friends and associates. My parents disowned me, and my friends and former associates distanced themselves from me. My doctor partners, both being solid Christians, later told me that they came close to locking me in a mental ward.
3. The Bible became love letters from the Lord. The scriptures and all of life were new. We devoured the Bible. We found the five-fold ministry in Ephesians, and recognized that each one of us five was functioning in one of those ministries. The spiritual ministries of 1 Corinthians 12 abounded among us. We had new and biblical life.
4. It was not a new thought to us that God could do anything He wanted to do at any time, because He was God and we were reasonably-well churched on that basic thought. But it was news that He would do what was asked by those who were walking close to Him – even if it was us. It was a revelation of the power of faith [or of the lack of doubt] in our lives as we abandoned our other walks and other gods to walk together and with Him. It was an entirely new way of living. It required that our lives be laid before the Lord and our minds re-made. We had become different individuals and we recognized true brotherhood in one another.
5. Our confidence and sense of direction grew as we drew closer together as new-found family. The Lord worked deeply in our souls the closer our spiritual family life became. As persecutions and other trials began, we were drawn even closer together. Our sacrificial commitment created needs, which we and the Lord met through more sacrifice, and His miracles. We had abundant life, but those around us who did not see God’s presence, who did not share in our vision of a united, common high calling, slowly withdrew. Others joyfully replaced them, eager to live the way of the cross. It was Acts chapter two, three and four all over again. After a while we were not entirely surprised by the on-going flow of wonderful “coincidences;” they became as if normal.
6. We were unconditionally committed in love to live as God’s family. Thus, we had found ways to get our lives and families closer together, starting with moving into that one neighborhood. All that we had was made available to one another, and to help the needy. We gave each other our money, our homes, our cars, our furniture, and ourselves, as needed. We did not drop out of society. Instead of turning our backs on society we made changes in society by setting examples at work, in our local school, and in our neighborhood.
7. As we were drawn together in that way, God’s more spectacular miracles flowed -- instant healings of bones and joints and backs, skin problems, mental illnesses, rising from the dead, spiritual deliverances, flows of God’s thoughts, and miraculous provisions (often at the last hour or day). These caused considerable notoriety, but after eight or ten years they began to diminish [but just publicly]. He continued doing those among us quietly, while continuing to make us disciples. That also prevented those from joining us who were more interested in the spectacular.
8. God’s grace in that way was making us stronger day by day. Power of persons and ministries, less than of miracles, became the mark of our lives as we were sent out around the English-speaking world. Sacrificial servant-brotherhood was our way of life. We were gathered and bound together for power.
9. Believing Christians who visited us found the life of Christ palpably real; many stayed. The Lord’s work was among very human people but was not of human making. We were willing human servants of the living God. He did not require much of us; He required our all. The cost was everything we were and had [whenever and wherever He called for it]; and the pay-off was everything He was and had [whenever we needed it].

My testimony of the functional mind of Christ among us in the living Body of Christ is told simply in my book, GOD’S DOCTOR. It is a little book about the glory of God in a routine life. There is power in Bodies of Christ.

Summation: God’s project is to make believers in Christ into the worldwide and local real Bodies of Christ, in order that the Body of Christ may show forth the fullness of Christ bodily. Jesus was Father-minded, sacrificial, peaceful, and spiritually productive in this world. That is God’s plan for us as believers. He is able.

1. Thanks to the Lord for another timely offering from A. H.:

From Psalm 23:1 – “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” Life was OK for David. He was the anointed King of Israel. He had defeated Goliath. Sure, he was chased around the countryside for a few years, but it all ended well and he had everything he could have hoped and dreamed for. He was rich and had plenty of servants. He probably had the best of everything. Sounds like a cushy number, doesn’t it. He reinforces this in Psalm 34:9-10 -- “Those who fear Him lack nothing,” and “Those who seek Him lack no good thing.” I am sure that was not as simple as material comfort.

Deuteronomy 2:7 says, “The Lord your God has been with you (forty years), and you have not lacked anything.”

Nehemiah [9:21] reminds the people, “For forty years You sustained them in the wilderness; they lacked nothing.”

Looking back at them they had food, water and clothing that did not wear out. I can think of a lot of stuff they lacked! They had no house and no land to settle in. They appeared to be wandering aimlessly, yet, “they lacked nothing.”

Are we able to say that? “There is nothing I lack.” If Jesus were asked the same question, I am sure His immediate response would have been, “**Yes!”**  Yet He did not have anywhere to lay his head. He did not have a job or steady income. He lived off the free giftedness of others, without asking for money. At times He was physically tired, hungry and thirsty -- John 4 ff. When His disciples returned with food, He said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing about.” His appetite and physical need for food had been completely cared for, as had been during His 40 days in the wilderness – Luke 4:1-2.

He told his disciples not to worry about food, drink and clothes because their heavenly Father knew what they needed. Instead they were to seek first God’s Kingdom. In Luke 22:35 He asked, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” “Nothing,” they answered.

So clearly the Lord provided the essentials for functioning under His anointing to achieve His purposes. In this sense nothing was lacking. He does not necessarily provide a ten-bedroom mansion with swimming pool overlooking the bay with matching Cadillacs in the garage. (I have always fancied a Cadillac.)

James1:4 states, “Let perseverance finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” He is obviously referring to spiritual provision, at least primarily.

If the Lord is with us, we lack nothing to fulfil His purposes in our lives. We need worry about nothing because the Lord knows we have legitimate needs. If our eyes are fixed on material stuff, we will always lack something. With our eyes fixed on Him we can rest in His provision (material and spiritual). We lack nothing no matter what is going on around us temporally that demands we believe the contrary.

Thank you, again, A. H. The risen Lord Jesus said He would never leave or forsake us. By faith we leave the consequences of our faith-walk to Him.

1. Our Father’s high purpose for us is to make us like His Son, Jesus, and He will accomplish exactly that which He purposes. His method is to “find” those to whom the revelation of Himself and the sharing of His secrets and the mysteries of His ways will result in a relationship in which we will be “bringable” beyond the veil and will sit at His feet there in the secret place of the most high God where we can learn to be the kind of friends in whom He can confide. That is the work of the Lord, and we are His workmanship. As you noticed, only He can accomplish His purposes.
2. It has been reported that less than 1% of recent revivals and awakenings around the world have been located within Western society and culture. George Otis, Jr. has offered ten reasons for this sad state of affairs. I will present them, with editing.

1) External distractions: Many of us find that our cell phones and computers are more attractive than quality time with God and others. This is not an overt rejection of God, but a continuing flow of momentary distractions by lesser things. Little things have caused us to lose focus on things important. It is a sneaky spiritual attack.

2) Internal offenses: The Western church has a high tolerance for disunity. Simply put, we think we just don’t need one another. Forgiveness is not one of our strengths. Instead, we demand our rights and remain in a state of perpetual offence. We distance ourselves from those who do not measure up.

3) No sense of community: Much of the world is tribal, clan, and community-based. The group and its unity and success are important to them. We are very individualistic. I, by myself, can have it my way.

4) Comfort orientation: And convenience. We can have church and even maybe revival as long as it does not interfere with our schedules, and especially our lives. Church is a part-time and spare-time event. Our lives are not centered on us and Jesus.

5) Limiting theology: We Westerners think all things start with God, and we are right, but when He says that if we will pray and repent and seek Him, that is His kick-start for us. Therefore, spiritual awakening begins with hearing and believing and acting upon His word, not [always] as a spiritual dump of God’s grace upon a blind, dumb and disobedient ass.

6) Absence of holiness: Yes, sin is everywhere, but I think it is accurate to say that the Western world is subject to temptations unprecedented in their sophistication, availability and persistence. We have found ways to hide our sins, even from ourselves and the Lord [not really]. More than half of American pastors report struggles with pornography.

7) Prayerlessness: Despite various prayer movements, prayer is much neglected. The understanding of what is and is not prayer is not clear. Historically and biblically, revival starts with the Lord being welcomed by a praying people. It has been said that Jesus is the only bridegroom whose bride will hardly speak to Him.

8) Ignorance of the past: Westerners are so forward-looking that we don’t learn from our past, even from our own past, like “last year” or “yesterday.” We don’t see the circular patterns of life, in the natural or spiritual, but we are in continuums, stumbling over the same rock.

9) Reliance on programs: We like to plan programs, even spiritual programs. Making our own plans brings immediate gratification – of sorts. Earnest activity can produce change and improvement, but not transformation.

10) Lack of desperation: We will do almost anything to avoid the painful condition of desperation. Early-on we may call them challenges that do not require immediate action, and we can get along with procrastination because we have so much cushion in our lives [immediate health care, social welfare nets, benevolent societies, social advocates, insurances, feel good churches, etc.]. We have so many options that a false sense of time and urgency allows further degradation before we initiate essential basic actions.

Study those, with me, for the purpose of transformation.

1. The Lord did it again. He got me between the eyes and in my heart. Peter made a great beginning by frankly acknowledging himself as a sinner – Luke 5:8. So the Lord took him as he was and began discipling him. Then, after 3 years of being with Jesus, on the occasion of the Lord’s Supper, Peter and the other disciples were arguing over who was the greatest among them – Luke 22:24. The Lord had accepted Peter [and me] as he was, brought Peter [and me] into close fellowship with Him, cleaned up Peter [and me], and granted Peter [and me] spiritual power. Beginnings, no matter how profound, are only beginnings. After entering the Gate, we must walk the path of Life so we can do a lot of voluntary dying to ourselves in order to gain Jesus’ nature. It is intentional, so is grace-filled. But Jesus is there.
2. We have been studying the Body of Christ, and the Mind of Christ which flows into and through that Body. The Body of Christ is the worldwide body of believers into Jesus, possessors of God’s Holy Spirit by God’s grace, not of the will of man. In order to function as a community of believers, the worldwide Body of Christ is partitioned into functional local groups wherever two or more are gathered in full-life, unlimited, united commitment to Jesus. Those who have settled for what may be called “card carrying” members, may dilute the reality of Christ in that Body, but are usually accepted into fellowship.

When God created the label “Body of Christ,” and dropped it upon Jesus’ followers, He meant the label to describe exactly what it said – a group of people who together are like Jesus Christ in nature and function. They have godliness and freedom, [the fruit of the Spirit], powerful ministries like Jesus, [the five-fold ministry], and are gifted with miraculous abilities, [such as the gifts of the Holy Spirit].

I began my spiritual walk in such a Body of Christ. Living in that church congregation was both unbelievable and experienceable, and for us became a normal, full-time way of living. Eventually, thousands joined that Body and formed other such Bodies of Christ around at least the English-speaking world.

I want to tell you what eventually happened to that Body of Christ. Before getting really specific and revelatory about what happened, I need first to teach the downslide process of those grace-filled Bodies of Christ worldwide and locally from the examples given us in scripture during that first century. They preview the common pattern of life that was then yet to come during and after the many outpourings of the Holy Spirit over the next 2,000 years of the church. It appears to describe the up and down life-pattern of God’s believers in the Old Testament, also.

Of course, the history record is often sparce for particulars over the 2,000 years of the church age, but in those places where we are given some information, the co-working or co-mingling of both flesh and Spirit after an outpouring of the Holy Spirit are parallel. That should be no surprise to any of us. Those similarities are outlined for us in the Book of the Revelation, chapters two and three. Read those chapters.

The condition of the normal church [Body of Christ] is found in Acts chapters two, three and four. Those believers were alive to Jesus as Lord of all, were possessed by the Holy Spirit, and ready to live and share His words, whatever the cost. They are the Lord’s best examples of the Body of Christ, so are given front page position. They were empowered for life and ministry as was Jesus, and were recognized as such by their public.

Soon they had Jewish clergy and non-clergy members, but their leadership was based on recognizable solid spirituality, commitment under persecution, and response to Christ’s gifting, not on religious training or social position. Suffering through persecution was expected because of their extreme love for the Lord Jesus who had been their example and who had tutored them.

Being together took precedence over previous life commitments. That was essential. It was a mark of being part of a Body of Christ, as much as your hand is an essential part of your human body. They owned their own property and stuff, but shared them as needed by others. It was obvious that they were God’s stewards of all they had.

They had male leadership of the Body; females were leaders in all ways but not over men. There are more basics shown about that church, but these will get us started.

In the Book of the Revelation chapters two and three, we are shown the developed strengths of those seven Bodies of Christ, and their developing weaknesses. Here, we will change entirely to the term “church”, instead of Bodies of Christ.

1. First, Jesus complimented the church at Ephesus for being able to see the sharp difference between flesh and Spirit, which is more than the difference between sinful actions and righteous actions. Flesh does include sinful actions, but it also includes human mindedness and benign-appearing self-will, which are spiritually disruptive forces, and yet are often appreciated in the modern church. But mainly, the church at Ephesus was losing the foremost-ness of their love for Jesus. Wives, try losing the foremost-ness of your love for your husband and see how He feels about you. Jesus used that failure as an early warning to the church at Ephesus.
2. The church at Smyrna was noted for their ongoing and increasing trials and poverty, results of their openly-lived Christian life, total commitment to Jesus and one another, and noticeable separation from commonly accepted sins. Jesus gave Smyrna a heads-up encouragement.
3. The church at Pergamum was holding to Jesus, but had found ways to compromise in order to avoid tough times, to soften the consequences of actually being Christ. They did not outrightly disobey or deny Christ, but a bit of scripture shading or omitting, or of being “reasonable” instead of “radical” was making life in their world more comfortable for them and their families.
4. The church at Thyatira had great and good deeds, works and ministries, but they had put women into leadership/headship over men. Women in leadership/headship over women is great, but all of scripture prohibits placing women over men in the church and there are consequences. Many cultures know that, but that which is called modern culture disagrees.
5. The church at Sardis had a notoriously good name because of their ministries. They were very active in good works, but their holiness and righteousness were failing. They had magnified the works of the Lord and neglected the Lord of the works.
6. The church at Philadelphia was full of good deeds despite having little power. That combination made their Lord very proud of them, so He urged them to more good deeds, while still not increasing their little power. The Lord loves and rewards little people who do much with little power.
7. The church at Laodicea was so lukewarm that it made Jesus vomit. It was wealthy in earthly stuff but spiritually poor, blind and naked. Why was it in such sad shape? Because He, the Shepherd, had been booted out of the headship [lordship] of His church. Instead, the flock [church members] were running it. They were doing in the flesh whatever they could to make it look like the Lord was present, directing and empowering things. This was a membership-empowered church, a democracy, in which the sheep selected and controlled their shepherds, not a church of elders selected and led by the Spirit. [It’s in the Book.] The Lord of the church knocked on the Laodicean church door, and offered them His headship, which for them would be a return of the church as shown in, you know where, Acts chapters two, three and four.

You may notice in your reading of those two chapters of the Revelation, that in each step of the church’s downslide they were [as we are] offered a healing, otherwise the downward slide would continue until He removed their lampstand [His light among them]. The choice is to repent and receive Acts chapters two, three and four, or to slide further down into religiosity and darkness. Over these 2,000 years the downslide has continued, with many episodes of temporary respites and improvements, like America is hopefully receiving right now.

Some of the church’s temporary respites lasted a few years, and some longer. But all have eventually failed or significantly diminished, and resumed their downward course. The good news is that the Lord is coming soon for a glorious church that will be like His Body is only supposed to be. It will not be perfect while still on this earth, but will be easily recognizable by those who know Him. It will be and do enough like Him that it will be stomped on by the world and raised up by the Lord.

So now, what happened to that particular Body of Christ that I was such a part of? I could go through the seven messages to those seven churches in the book of the Revelation and point to our identical gradual slide downward into nothing. As you would expect, ours was a series of insidious changes, but we began to believe that of ourselves we can do something. The spiritual renewal there failed because it became our renewal.

We ceased being proper and available building material for the Builder who said He would build His church, which indeed He had been doing so wonderfully, and we had known it. We and our spiritual stuff became our first loves, not Jesus. In our pride, we replaced Him with ourselves in our highly successful ministries. We began to focus on building church communities, relying on the sacraments and other religious practices, and we helped others do the same.

We failed to consistently recognize, or in some cases to accept, the ways of God as He worked among us. In those cases, we would resort to our own longer-used ways of the flesh. For example, He would tell us to trust Him, to extend ourselves a certain way, and that He would come through for us. With great confidence we would, but on occasion, at the last hour if He had not come through, we would do it our way – only to find that He had already done what He said He would do.

We had moral failure in our leadership, including among us at the top.

Top levels of leadership with large groups of disciples were sent out for years at a time, with next levels of leadership at the church not having the same anointing for spiritual leadership, commitment, love, wisdom, sacrifice, and the like.

As our spiritual life waned, leadership fell into the hands of those committed to the denomination and its particular religiosities.

Instead of plurality of equal leaders of both laity and clergy, we again became typically denominational in structure.

God, when we had ceased His being our Lord, shut us down. He gave the religious organization back to us. He removed our lampstand [His light} out of its place, where He had been among us. The remaining, dwindled congregation lost the physical building itself. The building is no longer a church building, but a residential loft. The residual faithful, about 70 souls, still meet together as that congregation, on Sunday afternoons in the building of a nearby Lutheran Church.

Yet we, the dispersed of that renowned congregation, all continue being believers, reliable members of church congregations, possessors and sharers of genuine life, and are destined for eternity with the Lord and each other, but we no longer experience that Body of Christ life. More good news is that the reality of that life, the fullness of Christ in a true Body of Christ, is being offered to others, and is being accepted by a few, by those who will be good and available material in the hands of the Architect, Foreman, and Lord of His church.

ESSENTIAL THOUGHT, for balance: It is better to have loved and lost, than to never have loved at all. It is not pleasant to lose, and some loss is due to sin, but to love and yield yourself extensively into the hands of the Lord while we are yet in this earth-life is worth whatever the cost. I was married to the ideal but imperfect wife for 68 years; she died a few months ago. I can tell you that it is better for me to have loved her and lost her, than to never have loved her at all. The Lord says the same to us as serious members of our local Bodies of Christ. His successes in our lives live forever; our failures end with our repentance. The next time we see Him it will be in regards to righteousness – righteousness only – Heb. 9:28. We cannot lose by loving the Lord with everything we are and have, and our neighbor as ourselves – even though we do it imperfectly. Don’t hold back. Rewards are never lost; and forgiven sins are washed away forever.

1. When the Romans destroyed the second temple in 70 A. D., the Jewish Sanhedrin met in the town of Yasvneh and made the decision to refocus Jewish religious life around the synagogue system. That meant that as long as more than half the world’s Jews were exiled from the land of Israel, they were no longer obligated to keep the commands of the Mosaic law concerning worship in the temple only. As of this year, 2020, 45% of the world’s Jews live in Israel, and the number may reach 50% in three or so years. That would appear to mean one of two things – that the rule of Yasvneh would have to be revisited, or that the temple would have to be rebuilt.
2. The Lord Jesus has been given to us to be [and He is] our life. Therefore, to those who are in Him, He is our everything else – our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption [1 Cor. 1:30] and everything else of God that we can imagine. It may be said that we have not expressed much of that which is ours, which come into function by faith. It is not said that He gives those things to us, but that He is those things in us. They are in the bank, in Him, in our souls. The ongoing process of our sanctification exposes and employs those riches.
3. If you are looking for a leader there in the church, put at the top of your list the one(s) who is most Christ-centered. The most perfect description of such persons is that they have put all things under their relationship to Jesus Christ. Their stuff is but rubbish compared to Him. [Borrowed from Philippians 3:8.] He has become more than their focus; He is their life. Why accept someone who is not living up to the Lord’s standard? The Christ centered person is on the road to wholeness and maturity. That’s the narrow walk. Look for those who are on it.
4. If the Lord was looking for one person who would stand firm for Him right there where he/she is [on the job, in church, in the neighborhood], could that be you? That’s all that would be needed! Just make His stand – one person, right there! Not something outstanding, but just stand for what He wants. That’s called “making a wall” where there is a breech. It is standing in that gap before the Lord on behalf of the land [company, local church, PTA] so that it will not be [further] destroyed.

Ezekiel 22:29-30: “The people have smeared whitewash for them, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ when the Lord God has not spoken. I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.” The Lord searches the whole company, congregation, and neighborhood for such a person, who has been praying for that purpose and is ready to act. So is God. Get up! One person can repair one hole in the wall and change the world.

1. Our obedience determines who is an overcomer, not our miracles or other spiritual powers and good works. The wonder-working, disobedient believers in Matthew 7:21-23 “will not enter the kingdom of heaven” [will not enter into godly fulfillment in His coming kingdom]. Recall that Moses, the great miracle-worker, did not enter the Promised Land because of his disobedience, but had to die in the wilderness without crossing the Jordan River. He suffered the same fate as had those unbelieving ones over age 20 when they came out of Egypt. They and Moses had all been delivered from Egypt by the blood of the lamb at Passover [born-again]. They were our picture of being saved. But because of their disobedience they did not enter the Promised Land, did not enter the offered fullness of God’s promises on the earth. Why were they disobedient? Because they did not believe what the Lord said.
2. Haggai was given a wonderful bit of information that should encourage every believer today. In 2:7 he wrote, “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Daniel had said that the Lord brings up and pulls down the leadership of nations. Here Haggai said that the Lord is the shaker of nations [think corona virus, financial, etc.] and that His shakings bring the nations to Him. That gets all people in step with the Lord for such things as peace and justice. After generations of their own leaders promising them a better life, but failing to produce, the Lord steps in, shakes them [us] loose from their blindness, and leads by serving.
3. An overcomer is one who is in agreement with the Lord, so that all areas of his/her life are in subjection to the Lord.
4. This is a very non-theological study, and I hope it will be recognized as such. I have tried to make this a life-experience study instead of a head-study. It is about being one with the God-man, Jesus Christ. It is about Ephesians 4:22-24. It is about Christ, not about our study of Him.

Two definitions: 1) Consecration – Having been chosen, set aside or dedicated for a purpose. Example: A lump of clay can be purposed for being made into a useful product, and the lump or its finished product set on the shelf, or used, according to its purpose. 2) Sanctification – Having been chosen for a purpose, then been seen, treated, used and realized according to that completed product, while going through a process designed to fully manifest that as-yet unfully accomplished purpose.

In 1951 I offered myself to Nancy for marriage and she accepted. From that time, even though we were not married until one year later, she and I and her family and friends set her aside unto me for marriage, which would mean until death would part us. She was consecrated to me; meaning that she was dedicated to becoming my wife, which she was yet not. She began to live as my wife-to-be, changing many things of her life and identity to begin matching mine. That contractual time, an engagement or betrothal, was known to be limited -- until we were married one year later. Likewise, I was set aside unto her, consecrated to her, dedicated to her for that same purpose.

When we were married, she was more than consecrated to me. She was sanctified, made holy as and entirely one with me, as a result our children were holy. She was my wife, fully, acceptable in every way. In whichever ways she was not perfect as my wife, I considered her to be my perfect wife. She deliberately changed whatever of herself was necessary for her to be my wife – working to put me through medical school, cushioning my wrong or difficult decisions, going with my decisions [after giving me her input], being adequate with shortages, rejoicing with our plenty, planning for better days and accepting lesser ones. For her, the process of wifely sanctification was a normal, desired and joyful process. She wanted to be one with and for me in every way.

In 1964 the Lord offered Himself to me for His and my bonding together, for me to be made like Him, and I accepted. Two thousand years earlier, He had done the same, meaning He had sanctified Himself unto me, meaning He had set aside His life, to become like me, a human, to unite with me, forever. From the time I accepted His offer, I too was sanctified unto Him, set aside unto Him for intimate union, as a spiritual being, forever.

Both of those sanctifications [Nancy’s and mine, and the Lord’s and mine] were done, were completed, at the initial times of commitment. It is not necessary for me to tell you that after the initial times of commitment there were continual opportunities for deliberately putting into action that which was already accomplished in our souls, for putting into action that which had been committed – called the process of sanctification. We were definitely set aside for one another [sanctified] for the duration of our contract [which turned out to be 69 years with Nancy, but with the Lord, forever], but we had to be transformed into proper expressions of what it meant to be set aside for one another. To be transformed is not simply developing new habits, but to be changed internally into the new man, Jesus.

The project was impossible, so it had to be the Lord’s responsibility – because I was to be made perfectly like Jesus. I had to become the nature of God, not just labor to act like Him. Our indelible agreement had to be fleshed from the inside out. After all, the reality of the results was the purpose of the initial contract. But, like Nancy and I were no more married at 25 or 50 years than we were on the first day of our marriage, the Lord and I are no more one now, nor will we ever be more one in the future, than we were from the time of our initial commitment to one another. I will only become more naturally His son in my soul and actions. How? By my active confidence in His completed promises, despite my evident, ongoing, often-repeated failures.

Now for some good news on how He did and is doing it – that is, conforming my soul and actions to those of Jesus. At the time of my initial setting apart for the Lord forever [when I was first sanctified], He did something that would ensure His final results would equal our initial commitment – He Himself came to live within me, imparting to me the full and perfect qualities of Jesus Christ. He who gave Himself to me on the cross 2,000 years ago, gave Himself to me in 1964. His Spirit entered my soul so that He could help, would influence and live my actions from within me, and that without dominating me. His being in me would mean little or nothing unless He was progressively and ultimately perfectly exhibited in me.

He became my identity as I realized what had happened to me. I cooperated with Him, although imperfectly. I knew that by His presence within me, I would not have to imitate Him, but that I could choose to let Him live His way in me as I believed Him for my sanctification. That became an ongoing act of faith in the truth of what had happened to me, that He was alive and active within me.

Because I believed what He had done [which I learned from Him and from His previously written Word] His character imparted to me was displayed more consistently from year to year, and more and more continually. There was less and less of the strain of trying to be righteous, and more and more simply the flow of Jesus’ qualities, through faith in Him. As I told a Christian brother recently, being sanctified is a combination of being convicted and repenting of our sinfulness and our sins, and of applying the truth of God’s word, that I am already the righteousness of God because I am in Christ Jesus – so I have no business behaving unrighteously like I just did – 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 1:17.

That is the righteousness of faith that produces righteousness in our human souls. Our faith is the tool God uses to accomplish the impossible. When we believe God, we are performing miracles. All we did was believe Him. We are born-again by our faith, and we are steadily sanctified by our faith. Without faith we cannot please God. Our well-meant efforts are failures, even when we improve our behavior.

Now for some delightful scriptures on the Lord’s and our sanctification:

1) In John 17:19, on the night before He was arrested, Jesus said to His Father, on behalf of His disciples, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.”

2) In John 17:17 He had said, “’Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” Jesus did not have victory over his humanity because He was the eternal Son of God, but because He had the Spirit of God in Him and had faith [or trusted] in His Father’s word. Our sanctification comes the same way. He believed that the words of God would carry all born-again humans, not only Himself, through the sanctification process. He said, “It worked for Me and will work for you.”

3) Hebrews 2:11 – “For both He who sanctifies [that’s God] and those who are sanctified [that’s us] are all from one Father; for which reason He [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Those brethren that Jesus is not ashamed of are us, we who are grossly imperfect in actions [compared to Jesus] and who are yet right here in our humanity, because we have been sanctified and are being sanctified by faith. Without faith it is impossible for God to be satisfied with us, but because of our faith He is satisfied with us. Faith is the victory, and faith gives us our victory – now.

I expect the process of sanctification to continue the remainder of my earth-life, and probably for considerable time thereafter in the ages to come.

1. The following was sent out to all of his contacts by David Wilkerson on March 7, 2009. It was an urgent message. You will recall that in the Bible the prophets uttered urgent messages as many as 100 years before their prophesied event occurred, but usually were only a few years. In this case, D. W.’s message was delivered 11 years ago. He said, “I am compelled by the Holy Spirit to send out an urgent message to all on our mailing list, and to friends and to bishops we have met all over the world. An EARTH-SHATTERING CALAMITY IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. IT IS GOING TO BE SO FRIGHTENING, WE ARE ALL GOING TO TREMBLE -- EVEN THE GODLIEST AMONG US. [emphasis by D. W.]

The message: “For ten years I have been warning about a thousand fires coming to New York City. It will engulf the whole megaplex, including areas of New Jersey and Connecticut. Major cities all across America will experience riots and blazing fires -- such as we saw in Watts, Los Angeles, years ago.

“There will be riots and fires in cities worldwide. There will be looting -- including Times Square, New York City. What we are experiencing now is not a recession, not even a depression. We are under God´s wrath. In Psalm 11 it is written, ‘If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?’ (v. 3).

“God is judging the raging sins of America and the nations. He is destroying the secular foundations.

“The prophet Jeremiah pleaded with wicked Israel, ‘God is fashioning a calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh, turn back each of you from your evil way, and reform your ways and deeds. But they will say, It´s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart’ (Jeremiah 18:11-12).

“In Psalm 11:6, David warns, ‘Upon the wicked he will rain snares (coals of fire)...fire...burning wind...will be the portion of their cup.’

“Why? David answered, ‘Because the Lord is righteous’ (v. 7). This is a righteous judgment -- just as in the judgments of Sodom and in Noah´s generation.

“What shall the righteous do? What about God’s people?

“First, I give you a practical word I received for my own direction. If possible lay in store a thirty-day supply of non-perishable food, toiletries and other essentials. In major cities, grocery stores are emptied in an hour at the sign of an impending disaster.

“As for our spiritual reaction, we have but two options. This is outlined in Psalm 11. We ‘flee like a bird to a mountain.’ Or, as David says, ‘He fixed his eyes on the Lord on his throne in heaven -- his eyes beholding, his eyelids testing the sons of men’ (v. 4). ‘In the Lord I take refuge’ (v. 1).

“I will say to my soul: No need to run...no need to hide. This is God´s righteous work. I will behold our Lord on his throne, with his eye of tender, loving kindness watching over every step I take -- trusting that he will deliver his people even through floods, fires, calamities, tests, trials of all kinds.

“Note: I do not know when these things will come to pass, but I know it is not far off. I have unburdened my soul to you. Do with the message as you choose.

“God bless and keep you, In Christ, David Wilkerson.” [5-19-31 – 4-27-11]

That which sounded unlikely in 2009 is being put into effect today. Yes, it is being done by the devil but the Lord’s mastermind and guiding hand is on it and all else for achieving His purposes, as with Noah’s flood, Job’s miseries, Jesus’ crucifixion, etc., etc. Let’s yield ourselves into the Lord’s hands, trusting and obeying Him, and work together to His glory in the short, well-crafted time ahead.

1. You will recall how eager we were to move ahead, to grow up, when we were kids, then teenagers, then college graduates. We did not have much motivation to move backward, or even to stand still in life. We were ready to change, to use what we had and were, to grow.

For some, the eagerness for growth is not the same in spiritual matters. Yet, our spiritual growth depends upon such eagerness, the letting go of what we have in order to move ahead. Much of our old ways have to be released, not improved upon. The Holy Spirit helps us do that. It must be done, or we don’t grow. Therefore, set ways to believe, such as honored denominations, can be traps.

A 40-year old man in diapers, with his mom or wife changing them, is a sad sight, but not too uncommon. Old habits, previous scientific or religious information, old friends – those sorts often have to be changed or adjusted in order to walk ahead with the Lord, to see things like He sees them, to develop new values, and perhaps to leave our past completely. That’s sometimes scary to our flesh, especially to our comfortable religious flesh, but rewarding.

1. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” – 1 Thess. 5:23. Amen.