THOUGHTS OF JANUARY, 2014

1. In THOUGHTS we think a lot about taking up our crosses daily and following Jesus –Luke 9:23. Just in case a little elaboration might be helpful, taking up our cross means yielding all that we have and all that we are to God. It’s good to have brotherly and sisterly Simons of Cyrene [Matt. 27:32] who help us in our crosswalking, is it not?

2. “Always try to be a little kinder than is necessary,” said J. M. Barrie, Scottish writer and dramatist. Extra goodness of any type is noticed and rewarded, always by the Lord and sometimes by man. It is said to be a mark of modern man that our hurriedness does not allow for such as more random acts of kindness, noticeable patience, deeper involvement, and well-mended strained relationships. It takes time for some virtues to be developed, evident and applied.

3. Another excellent word from G. K. Chesterton, supplied by B. E.: “Most modern freedom is at root fear. It is not so much that we are too bold to endure rules; it is rather that we are too timid to endure responsibilities.”

The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for centuries. They had had food and all other necessities supplied to them by their masters. When they went into the dessert with Moses they had a hard time handling their new-found freedom. They did the usual two things: 1) When they became needy, they wanted to go back to their masters in Egypt, re-exchanging the responsibilities of freedom for the reliabilities of slavery, and 2) they demanded their new-found rights of self-determination [generally], self-direction [where to go or whether to go], self-leadership [whether to remain part of the whole or to split] , self-interpretation [of God’s will], self-appointment [of leadership], and self-you name it.

The slave mentality destroys a society.

4. Christians, our behavior is based on how we see ourselves. If we see ourselves as simply human, we will behave like a simple human. If we see ourselves as victors over bad habits [sin], we will not be defeated by our former bad habits. If we see ourselves seated with Jesus in heaven, we will be overcomers here on earth.

We have a built-in alarm in our souls that tells us if we are about to violate our developed Christian character/behavior. [Character is the customized work and special mark which the Lord places on us to distinguish us from all others and to better equip society to deal with itself.] It takes time to develop character, but it can be destroyed quickly. Because godly character is highly pleasing to the Lord, and is a precious commodity [even in the church], we have been granted that alarm.

Actually, our alarm has a name – the Holy Spirit. We usually find it easy to hear Him. We see the reason why we are being warned, do understand it, and respond to Him with understanding. But sometimes our alarm goes off and we cannot find the threatening reason, or don’t agree with it, or decide that we can handle the situation. The alarm gives us a choice -– regard or disregard it. And, because temptation comes to us in areas in which we have strong personal desires [Jam. 1:14], our flesh adds our lust to our spiritual blindness, producing failure of character [sin].

Our sensitive alarm is too valuable to be mistreated. If we follow our own feelings and desires over the Spirit’s warnings, we dull and quench our sensitivity to His voice. See Ps. 119:70 [65-72]; Jam. 3:10-11; Eph. 4:30 [25-32].

5. The lists of gifts and ministries given several places in the New Testament are not complete, no more than the things that Jesus said and did are completely recorded in the Gospels – John 21:25. So, fellow saints, I have set my mind to listing a few of the many more deeds of the flesh than the 15 listed in Galatians 5:19-21. That’s a safe thing to do, because Paul and the Holy Spirit closed the list with “and things like that.” The following are some of the things like those 15:

 a. Self-pity – an easily justifiable and sickening compassion for one’s flesh.

 b. Bossiness – directing another’s servant – Paul helped us with that in Romans 14:4.

 c. Self-indulgence – setting aside God’s rules/word, to do a favor for a special person, that person

 usually being me.

 d. Timidity – low-grade fear with the guarantee of more to follow.

 e. Defensiveness – shielding God’s steward better than God can.

 f. Hypersensitivity – a poorly concealed loaded emotional handgun.

 g. criticalness – a self-appointed, faultless, full-time judge.

 h. resentfulness – picking scabs on one’s soul, lest they heal.

 i. worry – anxiety when we find another area over which we are not God.

 j. grumbling – discontent that must be quickly inflicted upon as many others as is possible.

6. Humanly speaking, to whom are you submitted? [Some may want to read that as, “To whom are you full-life accountable?” That is a bit less challenging.] Your boss at work? All forms of civil government? Your husband? Parents? Who is left out of that list? Answer: Specific leaders in your congregation, plus whomever they approve – Matt. 23:1-3; 1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17.

The usual first recognizable responses that our flesh presents to us at this point are: a) But they may be wrong, b) But they may be bad, and c) But no human is perfect. We fail to see that: a) The Lord has placed them in the church to lead us in the right way, not only to preach, bury, marry, and visit the sick, and b) We, too, are liable to be wrong, bad and imperfect, thus leaving ourselves in the not-so-good category of “doing what is right in our own eyes” – Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25.

Yet, it is true that we are not to submit to anyone completely except to the Lord. That means we should submit to the policeman when he tells us to “pull over,” but our whole life is not submitted to him. We submit to the boss on our job, but only for things related to our jobs, not our whole life. Wives submit to their husbands in all things but not into sin. We are to submit to no one into sin.

Trust develops trustability and trustworthiness. It leads to orderliness. What is does not lead to is rebellion and division.

7. Humans are united by virtue of being created in God’s image – Gen. 1:26-27. Perhaps Jews and Christians are the only ones who know that, in which case we are also the ones most called to live it.

As Christians, being possessors of God’s Spirit, we are in the forefront for being the Lord’s peacemakers – Matt. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; Jam. 3:18. In fact, since we have the Prince of Peace alive within us, we must violate something of Him in order to be unpeaceful. We, like Jesus, are not in control of others’ unpeacefulness, but we influence it. Only the Lord knows before our encounters if our peacefulness may lead to others’ peacefulness or anger. It is our assignment to go.

Peace, covenant-making/sustaining, brotherliness, unity -- all are akin, are they not? With the Covenant Maker alive within us, we are more capable than anyone of making and maintaining covenant with others, even those who choose to be our enemies – Matt. 5:38-48.

8. Just as “Democracy is a small hard core of common agreement, surrounded by a rich variety of individual differences” [James Conant (1893-1978), American chemist, Harvard University president and U. S. high commissioner for western Germany following WWII], similarly is the kingdom of God. The kingdom has its perfect King at its core, surrounded by a small hard core of disciples, who in turn are surrounded by more citizens of varying dedication.

There are no walls. As citizens, we can get as close to the King as we desire [to our blessing], or move back to the perimeter and stay there [to our loss].

9. What should we expect if we walk with the Lord, rather than just believing in Him and living a “good life?” Here’s a short list: Peace and joy with persecutions [ridicule, rejection, misunderstanding, and even physical torment and death – according to the times and geography of our ministries and the quality of our commitment to the Lord.] Yes; we all are engaged in ministry.

When the persecutions come, we have opportunities to die to our selves better than we did any previous time. Example: Blessing those who say and do things against us, knowing that in doing so we will be testifying to them of Jesus’ reality and we will get a better resurrection – Heb. 11:35. A better resurrection has to do with better rewards in the next location of our existence [first in Paradise, then on millennial Earth, then on the new Earth, etc?] than if we had not overcome our fears and neglectful living.

10. Why did you decide to follow Jesus, assuming that you have made that decision? I’m not asking how or when you were born again, but why did you decide to follow Jesus? Most of us could see that it was better for us, that we would be blessed if we followed Him, and other reasons of personal benefit. Following Him for personal benefit has always been the most common reason – John 6:26. Jesus accepted that, but taught them and led them into a better reason. He will lead us into that better reason if we listen to Him while enjoying our personal blessings.

Judas did not get what he wanted from Jesus, that the Romans be driven out and God’s kingdom be set up by Messiah Jesus of Nazareth. The Judas response can also happen to us, that we turn against Him if we do not get what we want on some special occasion or from life in general. Like Judas, the other disciples wanted special things, but when their desires fell through they ran instead of betraying Him. In contrast to that, Joseph continued following God’s directions even though life was “always” against him – dysfunctional family, murderous brothers, neglectful father, sold into slavery, innocent but convicted, etc. – Gen. 37, etc. Certainly he did not follow the Lord because he was continually blessed in so doing.

Question: Are those whom the Lord delivers from their pits [Gen. 38:23-38] more likely to be better followers than those who are delivered while on their mountain tops [1 Cor. 1:26]? Perhaps, yes. See Luke 7:47 and 2 Pet. 2:22. Ex-reprobates see the Lord and His way and the cross [His and theirs] as The Way, and are less likely to return to their vomit and wallow.

11. When Jesus was giving us His personal standard for life and righteousness, He gave us a standard impossible to attain to – His and [now our] Father’s in heaven. In turn, the writers of the New Testament epistles gave us an equally impossible to attain standard – the Lord Jesus Himself. As it was when I was in school, the best teachers always required more of us, and we produced better results. They helped us catch a vision for excellence, and then they helped us move toward it. Often we succeeded. At least we did our best, which was our teacher’s purpose for us.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul did exactly that for us. He wrote: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who lives, but Christ who lives in me.” Paul had not been physically crucified, but had appropriated Christ’s crucifixion for himself, in faith. That means he actually lived his life that way. That Way is reality. The spiritual way by faith is the Way of Life.

12. John the apostle was exiled on the lonely island of Patmos – Rev. 1:9. It was there in another of his own, personal, customized wilderness experiences that he, already an overcomer, became God’s instrument for making more overcomers. He was alone [not totally], shut off from the world [both a good and a bad thing], when he saw and heard what no one else of his day saw and heard – the Lord Jesus in His glory. That should be encouraging to us when we get into our own wildernesses, no matter their presentation.

13. Do you know how to discern between a temptation and an opportunity, other than by its obvious righteousness or unrighteousness? One jokester says that the temptation will give you many chances, but the opportunity gives you only one. There seems to be at least a bit of truth there.

14. When the Lord first told Moses to go back to Egypt and lead His people to freedom, He did not tell Moses much else. Like us, Moses wanted more so he asked what he should say to the Israelites – like, “Whom shall I say sent me to do this?” Still, the Lord was brief and greatly non-informative. He said, “Tell them **I AM** sent you.” Understandably, Moses still felt inadequately informed for the task. He asked for more information, but now not of the kind previously requested. I imagine him saying to himself: “I think I have been given all of the information that I need, but I still don’t understand. I will ask for a change in me so I can better understand God.” [That would be wonderfully insightful.] He asked the Lord for something that would change his attitude and the attitudes of those whom he had to convince that God had sent him – Ex. 33:18. His request? He asked to see God’s character and every good thing that God had ever done and ever would do. He got it! He saw the success of his redemptive ministry and of Jesus Christ their ultimate Redeemer. What an attitude changer! From then on, Moses lived in the accomplishment of his life’s purpose.

In the story of Moses, notice how the Lord created a faithful nation while bringing down an unbelieving nation. God’s people were enslaved, ruined, run over and filled through-and-through with apostasy. Satan and his forces ruled the day over God’s people and had been ruling for hundreds of years. They were in the grips of the most powerful nation on earth. Special laws were passed against them. God’s testimony on earth was ridiculed. During all of that [perhaps because of it] God’s people were a mess. They yielded to their earthly masters in order to get their earthly needs met. They worshiped idols. Sexual sin was rampant. They had nothing to offer God. They would never believe that their God would or could raise up just one person to deliver them [Moses believed that, too] because an invading army could hardly do it. But when Moses encountered God, and got a good enough view of Him, he became a tool of the Holy Spirit. He no longer had his own agenda, nor was he loaded with fear, nor was he limited by his humanity. He was led and empowered by the I AM.

Now Paul tells us, by the same Holy Spirit Who was there with Moses, that the same God and leadership and calling and power are now available to us – 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 3:17-19. The more we too see God’s glory, the better our relationship to Him, the more we are changed, and the more our relationship with others changes to how it should be.

15. “Those who have least to do are generally the most busy people in the world.” – Samuel Richardson [1689-1761], British novelist. For years I have know that if I want something to be done I should give it to a busy person. They get it done, then they enjoy their accomplishment while relaxing.

A comment on busy-ness. Everyone who appears busy is not busy. A bee may look and sound busy, even if not busy. Some bees and people just can’t slow down, even when they are doing nothing.

16. “The human brain is a wonderful organ. It starts to work as soon as you are born and doesn’t stop until you get up to deliver a speech” – George Jessel [1898-1981], American actor, singer, song writer, movie producer and comic entertainer. Having been myself struck with a blank mind on occasion, I must agree with G. J.

17. To show how easy it is to give unsolicited advice and go home, I’ll give some to pastors who are tired of pushing their congregations into doing the work of the church [Eph 4:12], then I’ll leave it with them. The attitude that the clergy are hired to do the church work, or at least the most important aspects of church work, is built into the more liturgical churches. It is in all churches, but seems to be more of a problem in the more liturgical ones where it has been institutionalized.

The usual story is that as more and more members are recruited into church responsibilities, less and less of them are spiritually minded. Those are less faithful, less dependable, and less imaginative. I equate being spiritually minded as being possessors of the imaginative, innovative and confident Holy Spirit, who is placed within us when we are born again. The natural person can be religious but not spiritual, unless he is possessed by an unholy religious spirit. Don’t let the church fall into the hands of non-spiritual or weirdly spiritual persons, no matter the supposed benefits – financial, talent, church politics, etc.

Furthermore, about church work and programs, don’t start any the Lord doesn’t start, don’t sustain any the Lord isn’t sustaining, and don’t bury any the Lord doesn’t bury.

See; dumping advice is easy. More in Thought No. 21.

18. Businessmen know the benefits of good will. They bend over backwards to make every customer’s contact at the business a pleasant and successful one in the customer’s opinion. We know, don’t we, that good will is a business word camouflage for having had a love experience. Christians should be good business people, although our brothers the Jews may have the upper hand here.

19. “What I have not said has never truly hurt me.” How often the Holy Spirit has whispered that Thought in my ear!!

20. Here is a Thought that probably does not bother us, but should. Question: If someone from the first century church did a study on today’s church life, preaching, adherence to Jesus’ teachings, and recreational activities [movies, T-V, vacations, etc.] and their expense, what kind of response do you think they would have? Do we care? What might be their report back to the first generation?

How about: “What has happened to our message?!!”

21. There is a powerful bond between all Christians. That powerful bond is our membership in the body of Christ. We are family. That bond was established because we were hand-picked by the Lord for membership, making us perfect for being one by and in Him. He makes no mistakes. Admittedly, that bond becomes nearly invisible at times and places, but it is there. It is obscured by Christian sinfulness and by non-Christians who are labeled as Christian. In both cases, it is a shame.

That which happened to Peter has again happened to the church. Peter denied the Lord. Jesus did not pray that Peter would not deny Him, but prayed that when Peter again turned he would help his fellow believers. He did exactly that, in abundance. In the same way, the church is going through a time of apostasy [no surprise to the Lord, and which He will turn to advantage], for which it is suffering from its sin, but in God’s time will also turn to our advantage. We are indeed responsible for our sins but the Lord has not relinquished His lordship. He is in control and has His purposes, even in our apostasy. That which will remain will be Life, have Life, and give Life.

In many places, the church has fallen into the hands of non-Holy Spiritualized members, some of whom are non-Christian and others who are Christians but have not had their minds christianized. The sad effect on the church and the world is the same either way. Religiosity cannot do the work of Christ, although it can do much temporal good when it is inclined in that way, usually due to being a part of a variably christianized society. When the church has been least like the world, it has been more like Christ and has then done its most good.

Something like this seems to be going on: Church rolls are composed of those who are born again by the Spirit of God, those who are not [some of whom will be and some of whom will not], some who know they are and some who think they are and some who do not want to be. Among the spiritually blind there are those who would be free in Christ if only they knew they were blind and bound. More on this in Thought No. 35.

22. If we do not perceive and accept the cross as it is offered to us in daily life, we cannot see the Way beyond our present difficult [cross] experience. Life will be simply one grueling, meaningless trial after another, driving us to seek relief from easily available but death-dealing sources.

Helpful hint: Focus on Jesus and that which He has said you should do. As always, any resulting faithful, obedient losses will then bring about our eternal and possible temporal advantage.

23. Anyone could make a quick list of the things wanted while in this life. Many would start with riches, then power, good health, long life, quality friends, and somewhere perhaps would be righteousness and other good things associated with God as He is known to the list-maker. Let’s deal with the first two on this list of some of us earth-minded people – riches and power. Would you rather be rich or powerful? George MacDonald [1824-1925], Scottish writer, poet and Christian minister, said: “To have what you want is riches, but to be able to do without is power.” As I understand G. M., therefore Jesus was both rich and powerful. If so, I’ll put those near the top of my list.

24. As a family doctor I have witnessed a number of beginnings and endings of earthlife, but most of all I was involved with people during those years between the gates – the gate in and the gate out. Being born was essential and dying was inevitable; neither was the focus. Those years in between are the focus of our earthlives.

We come to life in Christ in a moment, entering the gate of His eternal kingdom. As we walk the way, we come to a more full knowledge of Him. Being born again was not our or His goal, and neither is the walk along the narrow way. Now our goal is ahead beyond the gate which leads us out of this earthlife. Being born again enables us to see and be a part of the kingdom [John 3:3, 5] but the goal of kingdom life is forever ahead. When we see Him we will be like Him [1 John 3:2], which will be of great help in the ages to come – Eph. 2:7.

An age is a time in God’s eternal plans when He deals with His creation in a different way than in other ages. We are now in the Church Age. Next comes the Millennial Age, and then the New Heaven and New Earth Age. After that -- ??

25. We want [and sometimes “require”] the Lord to show us more than one step or one day at a time. But the limits He puts on our vision are essential for growth in faith – for without faith it is impossible to please God – Heb. 11:6. It is fine to ask humbly for more information, and to plan [even majestically] using the knowledge and experience we have gained from our and others’ walk with Him.

[When we “require,” we have chosen to walk in unbelief instead of in faith.]

26. Life is simple. Life in the Spirit is even more simple. O. Chambers advised this way into simplicity; 1) receive His Spirit, 2) recognize and rely on Him, and 3) obey Him as He brings us [develops – ed.] the truth of His word. Life is not only good but it is simple. How could He devise it any other way, considering the material He selected to become His sons and to inherit His kingdom?

27. Elisha accepted life as it was in the time, place and natural situation in which he found himself. He was aware of dangers but he knew he lived in the jurisdiction of God – 2 Kings 6:8-23. He was, therefore, an overcomer. That’s different from seeing the devil and danger around every corner and giving him undue attention.

When it came time for open testimony at his church on Wednesday evening, he spoke of the Lord, His presence with him, and His glorious deeds. [That last sentence is a bit modernized; not an exact quote from Scripture.] His life was about what the Lord God was doing, not about wrestling with the devil. He saw things as they were.

Elisha’s faithful vision delivered him from having to continually fight the devil. The battle of faith is already won. Battles against the devil are often lost. Our battles are not about the enemy.

28. I suppose that everyone sets goals and has dreams. At least they should. That’s evidence of being alive, of having been stimulated and continuing to be stimulated. Old minds [having nothing to do with age] are otherwise. The thing I see lacking in setting goals and having aspirations/dreams is that they are often self-conceived and self-motivated, and when achieved they are self-exalting – reaffirming the self-made person.

Although I do the same thing, over the years of my walk with the Lord my focus has increased in the direction of being available to Him, to His goals and His aspirations. That moves my earthlife goals upward into the divinely incredible but divinely achievable. It makes me comfortable, also, because I don’t have to devise and accomplish my life.

C. S. Lewis [1898-1963], Irish writer and theologian, whose works I hope that you know, said: “You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream.” He was a solid, imaginative and productive Christian, so I’ll give him credit for also thinking such things as: “You are never too old for the Lord to do fantastic things in and through you.”

29. One of the efforts of religions is to mold their adherents into better beings. They have variable measures of success. Some also seek to prepare us for the next life, again with variable success.

Jesus placed within our hands and messages the preaching of the cross – His and ours. The cross does not try to reform us, but to crucify us. It never fails to accomplish its purpose. Wherever the cross and its application are not preached, our messages do fail in their purpose.

So why not preach, counsel and bear our crosses? Simply put, it doesn’t feel good. Also, when not living an active faith-life, the cross-walk for ourselves seems unreasonable and nonproductive – meaning that it is bereft of more reasonable and more obvious things like religious works and good deeds. Those are the things we would rather do than to die on the cross. They leave no wounds or scars, but also leave no evidence of having died to self and been made alive to the Lord. If we have not died, we have not been raised up. We can try, but we cannot fake the evidence of having been resurrected.

30. Be careful that you don’t dodge uncomfortable circumstances or people just because they are only that -- uncomfortable. Running around to the other side of the mountain often means we encounter the same problem coming the other way.

It has been said that: “A person often meets his destiny on the road he took to avoid it.” – Jean de la Fontaine [1621-1695], French writer, fabulist and poet.

31. Anti-Semitism is again on the rise in Europe. For example, France, which has the world’s third largest Jewish community [after Israel and the United States], is having mass demonstrations in the streets, calling on Jews to get out of France. This is triggering a major influx of Jewish immigrants into Israel from France.

Not to lessen the sinfulness of such actions and its consequences on nations and individuals who persecute the Jews [Gen. 12:3; 27:29], it is worth remembering that the Lord said He would do what is necessary to bring Abraham’s natural children back to the Land. He drove them out of Europe before, during and mostly after World War II, and He is still doing it. There will come a time, probably soon, when He will do the same here in America.

32. Moses had a major change in his prideful soul after 40 years of being a big-shot in Egypt. He had to run for his life, becoming a herdsman in the desert for the next 40 years. Another major soul-change came when the Lord appeared and commissioned him to deliver His people from Egypt. Thereafter came a third soul-changing encounter with the Lord when, in the wilderness with Israel, Moses asked to see all of God’s glory/splendor – Gen. 33:12 🡪 34:9. This time Moses had asked to see the very nature of God, not only His endless array of wonderful things and workings.

When Moses saw God’s nature, he worshipped – Ex. 34:8. Previously he had prayed, interceded, wept, pleaded, sang His praises, and desperately cried out to Him, but he had not worshipped the Lord. [At least a description of such is unrecorded.] What was the difference? Moses’ first responses showed that he was focusing on a stern and heavy-handed God, sinful Israel and poor Moses, and relating to the Lord on the basis of what the Lord could do on behalf of Moses and Israel. When he saw God’s nature, that He was “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving kindness and truth/faithfulness, Moses worshiped. He saw the Lord; how He is. That relieved Moses of thinking he or Israel had to be perfect, and convinced him that there was a God-provided “cushion” available for sinful mankind. No wonder “parent” Moses worshiped. What a relief!

“Knowing the Lord” is a powerful soul-changer. The result for us is that we too are changed into His likeness -- 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:17-18; 3:17-19. We are changed from being resistors of God’s “heavy-handed laws” into being desirous of His laws – without any of the laws or our situations being changed. Like David, we delight to do His will – Ps. 119:77.

33. A group of 10 of us here in Corpus Christi named ourselves the Servants’ Prayer Council. That’s what we see as our calling and what we are doing. Several years ago, before we had settled on that name, we had various unofficial names, all of which were fine but too easy for others to misinterpret as prideful. The title of SPC has continued appropriately.

One of the most consistent words that we have accepted as from the Lord is that we should follow Him, as opposed to our devising good works and asking Him to bless them. For that to be a reliable path for us to follow, we had to have [and did/do have] a high level of confidence in the Lord’s willingness to speak to us and His ability to fix our ears so we could hear him – 1 Cor. 2:16. We understand the “we” in that verse to mean that “we corporately” will perceive His voice/will/way/directions as opposed to [or better than] any one of us. Coming to that understanding required a commitment to one another that, by God’s grace, we would love one another from our hearts and would express that love in both expensive and trivial ways. In my opinion we have done well and are improving.

Although we have been active individually and as a group, we have had times when we knew we were to sit down, or to stop. As with actively laboring for the Lord it is impossible to please Him without it being in faith, so it is also when sitting or stopping – it is impossible to please Him without doing it in faith. Accuracy of hearing and action are important but not as important as faithfulness.

The disciples were put very much in the same situation in Luke 24:49 and they obeyed as shown in Acts 1 & 2. Much has been and should be said about being active for Christ Jesus among the nations, but don’t be reluctant to sit and be silent – faithfully.

34. Six percent of America’s foreign aid goes to Israel. That’s so little for us to pay, considering what we get in return, such as:

 a. By law, 75% of that 6% must be spent in America, thus benefitting our economy.

 b. We benefit from Israel’s military, intelligence and defense expertise and information. That’s

 equipment, training and tactics.

 c. The other countries in the region vacillate between dictatorship and revolution. Israel is a stable

 and valuable ally.

 d. Israel is “America on the front lines.” Israel faces those who equally hate us, and daily are taking

 the brunt of that which is also meant for us.

 e. Israel shares our values of democracy and human rights.

 f. Israel loves and supports America, as most Americans love and support Israel.

 g. The Lord offers blessings to those who bless Israel.

From where I sit, we are getting more than our money’s worth.

35. Every Christian has God’s Spirit within. That means that we all start our lives as Christians with the same equipment, -- the indwelling Holy Spirit. Being so equipped, we have that which is required for us to know who and Whose we are, and to live righteously. There is a noticeable variability between Christians in respect to knowing our identity in Christ and living accordingly.

Jesus was born with the Spirit already within Him from the “beginning” of eternity, thus not having to be born again. When He came to earth He gave up all that He had, except His identity as the Son of God. On the other hand, we must be reborn of the Spirit. That means we experience a nature/character change from our old nature to our new nature in Christ as adopted sons of God.

Christianized people and nations are those who have been changed by virtue of the church being present and influential. Christianization commonly results in a person or people who have accepted various special Christian beliefs and practices. Many become members of local congregations, do much of the work of the church, and even become church leaders. Their presence and labors are beneficial and appreciated by all. Some good tests to apply very carefully to them [as to ourselves!] are the fruit of the Spirit [Gal. 5:22-23], their love for Jesus, their biblical spirituality [1 Cor. 2:12-14], and their honor of Scripture over their suppositions.

Some Christians have also been anointed with the Holy Spirit, which equips us with the spiritual power to lay down our lives in service to God [Acts 1:8]. That’s what happened to Jesus soon after He was baptized by John the Baptist [Luke 3:21-22]. Until that time He had been the Son of God on earth for 30 years [Luke 3:23], by age 12 years had come to know His Father in heaven [Luke 2:42, 49], had lived a perfectly righteous life, but had never performed a miracle [John 2:11; 4:54]. With that additional act of God upon Him, He was then equipped to reproduce Life and to build His Life-given and Life-giving church. As with Him, we too then are equipped to do things that are desperately needed here on earth. Just as Jesus brought heaven and earth together, so now do we [Acts 1:8].