THOUGHTS OF NOVEMBER, 2011

1. We in America have put our brothers in Mexico in a difficult place. Much of the illegal drugs that we receive come through Mexico. There is so much profit in the illegal drug business that Mexico is being taken over by the drug production and transportation cartels. Mexican leaders have long told us that Mexico is not our problem; that they cannot stop the flow of drugs through their country until we stop using, or perhaps legalize, currently illegal drug use.

Now there is a stunning and new drug problem. More Americans are dying of prescription drug overdoses than are dying from cocaine and heroin combined. There has been a fourfold increase in those deaths over the past 10 years, which matches the fourfold increase in the number of prescriptions written for those powerful pain killers.

Lord, strengthen our spiritual backbones, move us to wise and effective measures, give us leaders who are committed to You and send us Your Spirit for revival.

2. Israeli ambassadors in Western nations have been instructed to inform high ranking politicians that the window of opportunity for imposing effective sanctions against Iran is about to close. That has to do with stopping Iran’s progress developing a nuclear bomb. The ambassadors were instructed to tell those top leaders that there is not much time left to stop Iran’s nuclear program by diplomatic means.

Israel has military plans to stop Iran, and that may be very soon – possibly before I send out this edition of THOUGHTS at the end of this month, November. America and Great Britain also have joint plans for a military action soon. Of course, Iran says it will annihilate Israel and both countries if they move against her militarily.

Scripture fulfillment is moving at a fast pace, is it not? I look for Damascus, the capital of Syria, to be next for destruction. Isaiah’s [17:1-3] word has never been fulfilled, but must be. The situation is ripe.

3. When it’s your turn to be a failure, make sure you end up being a successful failure. Peter failed his rabbi, Jesus, on the night Jesus was arrested. Jesus had prepared him for being a successful failure by telling him he was going to be tested, would fail, that He was not going to pray he would not fail, but that He would pray that Peter would turn again to righteousness and help his brothers. That’s what happened. Peter was a successful failure.

The Lord turns all things to good for those who love Him and are His called ones – Rom. 8:28. The only things the Lord can turn to good are the bad things. It is no surprise to Him that we regularly sin, so He has dedicated Himself to the task of making the best and most out of our sins – which only He can do. As Paul said, don’t sin so that we can multiply God’s grace toward us – Rom. 6:1-2. God forbid! Just like Peter, when we sin we have to repent. Then we and our sins are turned to His glory – meaning that He is pleased, that others see the humility and honesty of believers, etc.

4. A refined religious lifestyle poses as the real thing, and is a major threat to the church.

5. The International Atomic Energy Agency is planning to issue a report this week, and today is already November 12th. It is purported to say that Iran is clearly working to develop a nuclear weapons program. Israel is committed to stopping the program, which they say has now advanced to the point of no return.

Separately, America and Britain have joint plans to stop the program. The latest guesstimate is that Israel will strike before the end of this year, possibly on or around Christmas. Others think Israel’s strike would be very early in January, 2012 and will be without America’s approval, or seem to be so.

6. Is it possible for a Christian to live in sin; a significant sin, such as drunkenness, homosexuality, adultery, serially murdering, and teaching others to do the same? I don’t know why we have to ask the question! How far do we have to look before we see the answer? Jesus said hate is murder, lust is adultery and greed is thievery. It’s not just that doing those things is sin, but they are insults to God because believers have the ability to choose Him and His will instead of sinning – and we don’t. Also, when we sin we injure the church, His body. And, we injure ourselves here in this life. And we will sustain loss in the hereafter if we don’t genuinely repent.

The “we’s” of 1 John 1:6-7 tell us that Christians can walk in darkness, in sin, not practicing the truth. That’s not unbelievers; but believers walking in sin and darkness. In 1 John 2:9-11 the same point is repeated, and emphasized: So, 1) believers sin, 2) sinning brothers are still brothers, and 3) the Lord wants sinning brothers to turn back to Him and walk in the light.

Walking in darkness and sin is equated with being carnal – 1 Cor. 3:1-4. Notice that in verse 3 the carnal behavior mentioned is having divisions in our lives. The consequences are seen in 1 Cor. 3:13-15. “Suffering loss” is a painful event. The opposite behavior brings personal rewards – Rev. 2 & 3; 19:7-8.

So what is to be done about the carnal sinners among us? How about restoring them in a spirit of gentleness – Gal. 6:1? If we have that attitude toward them, we can begin the process Jesus sparingly outlined in Matthew 18:15-17.

7. Five of the Dead Sea Scrolls are now online. See http://bit.ly/qMuurz.

8. Nazca Lines are a series of ancient geoglyphs [works of art that were made from moving or arranging stones or earth or other objects within a landscape] located in the Nazca Desert in southern Peru. Geoglyphs are also found stretching from Syria to Saudi Arabia. The large ones cannot be seen or appreciated from the ground, but are amazing from the air. Therefore, many are unknown to the public. New satellite technologies are enabling researchers to discover more and more of them.

9. A 1400 year old war is heating up in the Mid-East and it may give Israel some respite. The Shias and Sunnis, two “denominations” of Moslems, hate one another. They can’t even marry one another. Those countries are controlled by one or the other. They, large and small, are piling up weapons, anti-missile batteries, and sandbagging their oil terminals, ports and water desalinization plants. Those preparations are not for a war with Israel, but for a war of Shias vs. Sunnis. They are quietly digging in for an epic fight.

10. Scripture was handed down to us in various ways. Humanly speaking, it’s amazing that their accuracy and order were able to be maintained – considering the following:

 a. Oral tradition – early Old Testament centuries and early New Testament decades. From Adam to Moses there appears to be little or nothing known of the written word of God. However, the Sumerians were adept at writing by about 4000 B.C., and the Egyptians and Babylonians almost as far back in history. Remember that the Holy Spirit told us that Moses could write – Ex. 34:27.

 b. Written traditions – Exodus 34:27; John 14:26; 2 Peter 1:21. Ancient writing materials: stone, clay, wood [probably as in Luke 1:63], leather [the Dead Sea Scrolls], papyrus [two layers of reeds set at right angles to each other then pressed together to form a sheet. The New Testament was written on papyrus.], vellum [calfskin], parchment [lambskin], paper [starting in 900 A. D. in Europe], metal, the printing press, and now our many methods of storing and transmitting information.

11. There is no end to marriage advice. Advice is wise suggestions offered on a take-it-or-leave-it and you-are-on-your-own basis. Less abundant is marriage counsel. Counsel is wise also; is also customized to the persons and their situation, plus it binds the counselor to walk through the situation with his/her counselees in whichever way is necessary to see the process through to its successful conclusion.

That having been said, here is the marriage advice. It is marriage counsel only to those whom the Lord’s grace will bring the three [or more] together for as much of total life involvement as is needed.

 a. If you want the process and the result to be conformed to God’s word, fine. If not, I have no sweet words to ease the pain of your decision to find a way around God’s will.

 b. The Holy Spirit will keep this clear thought before you until the end: “Developing a good marriage is not complicated; it is direct and straightforward.” However, the flesh will not want to cooperate with the Spirit, so the execution of God’s project may be difficult [but only on the flesh].

 c, You are going to become a constant giver, meaning that you will be learning to focus on your spouse’s needs and sometimes on his/her desires. You will not be doing that to receive the same in return, but that will happen. Those times when it does not happen will be the times you will experience the Lord cleansing your motives. It’s a win-win situation for you. If you treat your husband like a king, he will treat you like a queen. If you treat your wife like an ignorant tramp, she will treat you like an ignorant tramp. We reap what we sow.

 d. Throughout the process, be patient with the Lord. Yes, it’s the always-perfectly-on-time Lord with whom you are to be patient, not your slowly improving spouse. Hurtful reactions and words often come from our impatience and can cause delay and can undo previously hard-won progress. Think and act strategically. Here is a general rule: “If you hastily entered this marriage, improvement may come slower than if you had strolled into it with your eyes open and your hormones under control.” That’s because the Lord is doing some basic soul work in both of you; work that should have been done before or during the “I will” time; not after the “I do” covenant was established. Be patient as unto the Lord.

 e. Especially when your spouse is stoking your anger, let it go! No, I’m not saying that you should blast him/her. I’m saying that you don’t have to prove yourself right, or even to make your point [another time!]. If the Holy Spirit has been working, “Lord, help me lay it down” into your prayers, notice how promptly the Lord will give you another topic – one that will bless your spouse on the spot. In your private prayers you can practice the love method of laying it down. Do yourself a favor.

 f. A short time ago you saw all those positive character and physical traits in your spouse. They are still there. Become a mining engineer. Dig them out. While you are overlooking his/her weaknesses, compliment his/her strengths. If you want success in this effort, don’t flatter or lie. Your well-meant unrighteousness will not produce God’s or your spouse’s righteousness.

 g. Get a counselor who will not be objective; one who will get into your souls and lives with you and be part of the Lord’s growth process from the inside out; who can truly rejoice and weep with you; who will not only come alongside but will get in the fire with you.

12. This Thought is about church leadership, especially of local congregations. It has to do [briefly] with deacons and [mostly] with elders.

 a. Deacons: Every congregation has deacons whose duties free the elders to do their jobs. That means that their work is defined by the needs of the elders. The specific job description of deacons must remain flexible. A deacon may later become an elder, but the office of deacon is not one of elders-in-training, such as a minor league for eldership [cpr. Stephen]. Deacons have spiritual authority within their ministries of service, but not over any area of the church. They serve the elders and serve on behalf of the elders.

 b. Elders: In each local congregation elders are the more mature and stable men – relative to that congregation. An elder in one congregation may not rise to the level of eldership if he were in another congregation. Elders carry authority and are instructed to exercise it with a servant’s heart. They set the standards of the church, by their words and deeds.

 In Matthew 16 Jesus, the Head of the church, gave the keys of the kingdom and explained that those keys are for binding [locking] and for loosening [unlocking] matters both in heaven and on earth. WOW!! Possession of those keys grants real authority. It was to be Jesus’ authority abiding in the delegated authority of humans. Humans were granted the authority to govern His church. I trust that we don’t have illusions that Jesus thought the church’s human authority would be only in the hands of perfect ones [note both Peter’s and Judas’ multiple sins, and they were present when Jesus gave the group His keys].

So the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to describe church leaders who have proven leadership qualities. None were perfect, none were required to be perfect, but each were and are required to search the Scriptures, the mind of the Holy Spirit, and the mind of Christ among themselves to determine that which is permitted in heaven and on earth from case to case. We have and know biblical principles and have and know the Holy Spirit, thus wise judgments can be applied to particular situations. That puts the keys of the kingdom to use.

 That speaks to the question of who holds those keys. I believe Scripture points to a plurality of those key holders acting in concert in every local body of believers. That makes every individual Christian potentially eligible for leadership as they are formed into a unit with other Christians by the Holy Spirit. My understanding is that Jesus gave those and subsequent disciples His kingdom authority corporately. It is the responsibility of those who are more spiritually “elder” to those who are more spiritually “younger” to protect the purity of the body of Christ, to honor God’s word, and to lead those who would follow them in the way of the cross.

13. What is it that makes Israel flourish and the nations around it live in sand and squalor? Of course, it’s the Lord and His blessings – spiritual blessings and genetic blessings and cultural blessings. The cultural blessings have been described as: imagination, ambition/desire, skill [even if they had to start from “scratch”], work ethic, and perseverance. Sounds good to me.

14. God’s will is revealed in many ways, including through those in authority – civil, family, workplace, church, etc., if it is not contrary to His already-revealed word in Scripture. Such earthly authorities never have God’s full knowledge and wisdom but they can and do provide God’s will in matters under their authority – all authority being of Him. Example: The parents in a family have deliberated over establishing a routine bedtime for their children. Those parents have no difficulty deciding that 9:00 p.m. is a good and healthy bedtime for the kids. All agree to the rule, and all know that 9:00 p.m. is God’s will for them. Then, on a particular night the children ask for a 10:00 p.m. bedtime; the parents agree. At that point, the faithful family has agreed that God’s will is for a 10:00 p.m. bedtime that night. God’s will has been given into the hands of those parents, even though they had received no special spiritual-mental telegram from God. They had acted upon common knowledge and biblical instructions. As long as man’s decisions do not contradict God’s will as already stated in Scripture, His will as established through man on earth will also be His will which He establishes in heaven. Note this: If those kids disobey their parents in the matter, they are disobeying God, which is called “sin.”

15. The Lord loves differences. Differences force God’s people, who love Him and their neighbors, to love one another God’s way. God’s love among His people produces shining lights in the world. The world takes note. It knows it cannot duplicate that brightness of light.

Our flesh detests differences. We can put on a show of fellowship and love for those different from us, for a time. Our flesh prefers we live like birds of a feather that flock together around our identicalness. That goes for religiosity, skin color, manners, way of dress, righteousness/unrighteousness, rightness/wrongness, nationality, culture, whether we do or do not eat 2 cloves of garlic three times a day and at bedtime, etc.

Jesus was the only perfectly balanced soul. He was surrounded by differentness of others’ souls. All others than He are unbalanced. We need another [or more] equally unbalanced souls to bring balance to us by their differences leaning against and contrary to and opposing us. Iron will sharpen iron if we in our unbalanced states will not back off from God’s gift to us of others in their unbalanced states.

For every force there is offered a balancing counter force. That’s the rule of spiritual and matter inertia/stability, is it not? If Christians are to be a whole and stable people, we need our opposites to stand with us.

16. Not too different from the preceding thought is this, that the inbreeding of likeness weakens the body, producing sickness and death. The process can be seen as sects form, firm up their theologies, judge others who are different, and separate from their cultures. Poison is in their pots.

A natural expression of this Thought was shown in the royalty of Europe during the 1700s and 1800s. Intentional inbreeding of the aristocracy resulted in a narrow gene pool, the weaknesses came forth, and hemophilia developed. Their children died by bleeding to death. Similar problems [genetic malformations] develop when children are produced from within close family groups.

Good scientific understanding always harmonizes with good spiritual/biblical understanding. All of the Bible always agrees with all of science, although not every theologian agrees with every scientist. Even fallen creation still has a remarkable agreement with its unchanged Creator. When one begins to harmonize with our Creator, our imagination is enriched and we begin to envision and “invent” things. That’s faith. When His word went forth, it created things that perfectly harmonized with Him. All of creation composed a picture of Him and His character [Rom. 1:19-20] – the first man, Adam, being the most perfect representation of His image, until Jesus.

17. When the Second Person of the Trinity came to earth He already had God’s Spirit within Him. That meant He did not need to be born again in order to become the Son of God; being that He already was. Contrariwise, we were not born into God’s family when we had our natural birth; we had to be born again [reborn spiritually], at which time God put His Spirit within us, making us part of Him and members of His family.

At that beginning point in Jesus’ earth life [which was a continuation of His eternal life as God’s Son], and ours as born again members of God’s family, we and Jesus were yet lacking God’s power for going forth into the world laying down our lives as living martyrs serving Him. We and Jesus had God’s Spirit within us, but did not have God’s anointing upon us. Jesus and we had that which was necessary for personal righteousness and spiritual identity, but we [Jesus and we] did not have the power of the Third Person of the Trinity. At age 30, when He began His ministry, the Second Person of the Trinity did not minister in the power of the Second Person of the Trinity; only in the power of the Third Person of the Trinity.

That which we need for personal righteousness and for identity as God’s sons comes by our being born again. That which we need for ministering for God comes by the Holy Spirit being poured out upon us.

18. Under the Law of God in Israel, penalties could not be carried out immediately by victims or witnesses; only after receiving an order from a judge. On the other hand, if victims and witnesses did not come forth with charges, the offender was not pursued or punished by the judges or others. The prosecution of offenses was the responsibility and at the will of the witnesses. Also, testimony in court was considered a civic duty – Lev. 5:1.

So, when Jesus called for the execution of the woman caught in the act of adultery, do you think He was really ready to pronounce the death sentence upon her? Do you think He meant what He said? I think so. But, He dismissed the case because none of her accusers were willing to testify against her. Their self-righteousness was shamed by self-conviction; thus mercy was able to triumph over judgment.

Remember that in the Jewish courts of Jesus’ day only the witnesses/victims could bring a case to court, and they knew they had to cast the first stone in capital punishment cases, such as was adultery. The penalty for lying as a witness was that the liar him/her self was executed instead of the accused. Jesus was challenging the witnesses, saying that if they were determined to continue with the case he was ready to poke holes [if any] in their testimony and that they might die that day instead of the woman. The witnesses declined to prosecute the case, and left the scene of the trial. Without witnesses, the case was dismissed. The only One who had the authority to judge her was left without a case.

As Paul said, who will bring charges against God’s elect? God the righteous Judge does not, so there is no longer any case against us. When we sin, at the most we get spanked and we lose rewards, but we do not and cannot get capital punishment.

In case you don’t know, the spiritual person judges all things. Our judgment must be righteous, even if we have our facts wrong. Wrong facts are not what make our judgments unrighteous. Righteous judgment draws us to the one who has fallen; unrighteous judgment causes us to withdraw from the fallen one. We are told to judge all things, but to keep our attitude godly, even if we need to mete out punishment.

19. We hear about “ministering to the Lord.” I suppose that means the Lord needs or enjoys receiving something from us. But, does He need ministering to, or does He only want to be ministered to?

Let’s consider whether we need our car, or our mate, or the air we breathe. If we are talking about desire for our mate, yes; if convenience of our car for transportation, yes; if need of air for living, yes. But then, we don’t need any of that in order to continue our course into the glorious hereafter. So, the Lord does not need us to survive, nor need us to accomplish His purpose on earth, but does need us from the perspective of giving Him love and receiving His love. Love exchange is something that will satisfy Him, and only we can provide it.

20. The first sign of Life is the admission of personal guilt, even if “our fathers” started the downward slide and “we descendents” appear to inherit all the suffering. That is the picture of Israel’s many near-demises, is it not? Also, check out the prodigal son. He came to his personal senses when he hit bottom. He did not blame his father for letting him squander his fortune [“Dad should have remembered that I always wasted my weekly allowance.”] and he did not blame his older brother [“If he had not been always picking on me I would not have left home.”] or his mother [“Mom should have sent me some regular money.”]. There was no blame, only personal acknowledgement of sin.

21. Scripture is loaded with teachings and examples of how the Lord uses Satan to chastise and correct and mature His complaining and rebellious people, yet it is remarkable that few Christians accept those parts of Scripture as being true. They refuse to think “ill” of God our Abba Father.

I think we have a poor understanding of “the love of God” and of righteous earthly parenting. I wonder what the Lord thinks/knows of us when He spanks us and we curse the devil? If I was spanking my child [because I loved him and he needed to be spanked] and he was kicking against me and resisting me, that would be evidence that he did not know me, nor know my ways, nor know the feel of my hand upon him, nor know my presence. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11 we have opportunity to put into effect that which Job knew and lived – God created and uses Satan to accomplish His purposes, even to our and Job’s and Jesus’ and Paul’s emotional distress and physical harm. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 reinforce this Thought.

22. The person who tells you the most truth about yourself is the one who loves you the most.

23. Alright, all of you fellow full-time sufferers! Justification has finally come. When no one else would take up the mantle of Lamentations, we realistic ones did. We knew all along that we have bonafide reasons to fret about not getting that which is owed to us, that we don’t really matter to others despite their grand shows of friendship and self-sacrifice, that there are no solutions without problems [so we must diligently search-out all of our and other’s’ problems, and stress our brothers so that their more deep-seated sin and weaknesses can be revealed], that only when we are true to ourselves is it possible to attain to the anointed high calling of being able to help others be bathed in the purulence of our pathological guilt, and that we are our greatest blessings to others when we freely share with them out of the abundance of our paralyzed souls.

There is hope for the world. We are winning. The majority are now on our side. Protests and riots are abounding at last! Bloody revolutions are all around us. Financial disasters are at hand. We have won! We have won! Cling to our entitlements. Everything they do is purposed against us personally. Don’t waver; keep your focus on those problems. Don’t waste the opportunity to spread the glory of guilt, strife and darkness that surrounds us. Don’t become ensnared in the deceit of gratitude and Thanksgiving, joy and Christmas, hope and the beginning of a New Year.

[Who was that masked man?!!]

24. The Lord is desecularizing the church. He is the only one who can do it, because the church as we know it is almost entirely dependent upon the secular, ministers mostly in the secular, and has not much more than secular power. We have allowed the world to frame the picture and ministries of the church. The church has little picture of how the Lord Jesus would build His church, so uses religious-flavored secular methods to build itself – if it can.

Just as the world has framed the picture and ministry of the church, so has the world convinced the church that “politics is God.” That thought is obviously wrong when it is said so bluntly, but it has a sneaky way of becoming functional unbeknownst to us. The Lord is working to depoliticize the church [not meaning that the church must not at all be involved in the political process].

25. Here is something for each of us to listen to: We are at the end of an age. Things as they are and have been, the familiar and “normal” circumstances as we have known them, are rapidly coming to closure. We are here for this time. We are part of the closing of a/this chapter. Avoid the dark.

26. An anointed person is one on whom oil has been poured for purpose. Oil in Scripture is always a shadow/picture of the Holy Spirit who comes upon us, empowering us for His purpose.

Characteristics which follow those who are anointed are; 1) increased capacity for things of God, because he/she functions less in the flesh, 2) greater endurance, because the Lord is his strength, 3) more definite image of Jesus, because He has become their focus, and 4) more desire and devotion to the Lord, because they have seen Him. Moreover and therefore, 5) they have quick access to truth from the Holy Spirit, and 6) they gather with and bond together with sinners and saints more quickly.

On a slightly different tack, the ministry of an anointed person/group, 7) has clarity, 8) is pointed and incisive, 9) thus opens ears and 10) draws and moves others into God’s planned application of the presented truth.

The effect of number 9 should be adjusted for possible opposite results than is described in number 10. The presence and ministry of the Anointed One and His anointeds may not result in opened ears and righteous movement of the hearers, but instead may simply move the hearers off high-center and into negative action, such as was Jesus’ effect on the Pharisees. They were supposedly holy and righteous, until they were moved into the light when they murdered their Messiah, their long-awaited Anointed One of Israel.

27. In 1608, the Pilgrims left England for Holland because of persecution by the Anglican Church. [Yes, the Anglican Church. – ed.] William Bradford, their chronicler and long-time governor, wrote that they had, as “the Lord’s free people, joined themselves by a covenant of the Lord into a church estate, in the fellowship of the Gospel, to walk in all His ways made known unto them, according to their best endeavors, whatever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them.”

That’s a remarkable covenant, is it not?

28. Thought number 27 brings up a Thought about not judging those of the past by our current attitudes, understandings, knowledge, abilities and standards. It starts and flows with “what if’s,” so be careful with the temptation to form firm conclusions.

What if the British Colonies in America had not rebelled, having used “taxation without representation” as a major reason for our rebelliousness and for the rebellion? If so, we would not have had a constitution and nation in which slavery was legalized and cemented into place. If so, we would not have had our war for independence, with its usual consequences of deaths and estrangement. If so, since England stopped slavery within itself and tried to stop slavery around the world [while slavery continued in America], slavery would have been stopped in its American Colony earlier than it was, and without a violent Civil War and its consequences, including over 500,000 military deaths. Want if?

29. Preventive medicine, like preventive driving, preventive eating, preventive legislation, etc., is not popular. “I don’t have need of that now. I am not having that problem.” However, for you guys and for the gals who love you, notice these measures considered to be very helpful in regards to preventing Benign Prostatic Enlargement [BPH], which afflicts 1/3 of men by age 50 and 3/4 by age 70. These measures are also helpful in relieving BPH symptoms once you have it.

 1) Men with BPH should not take over-the-counter antihistamines or decongestants and should avoid delaying urination.

 2) Men with BPH should limit the amount of fluid consumed at any one time and not drink anything after 7 p.m.

 3) Men with BPH should avoid beverages that contain caffeine, limit alcohol intake and cut back on spicy or salty foods.

 4) Engaging in regular physical activity, particularly by doing Kegel exercises, also can help reduce BPH symptoms.

 5) Stay warm. The sympathetic nervous system is more active in cold weather, which causes increased smooth muscle tone within the prostate. That causes increased symptoms of BPH.

 6) If overweight, lose weight. If not overweight, prevent weight gain [especially around the middle]. Eating a diet rich in vegetables, and keeping blood sugar under control also may help keep prostate enlargement in check.

I think our ability to engage a problem before it appears on the horizon can be compared to various methods the military has for engaging the enemy beyond its horizon, such as the AWAC, a high-flying radar-equipped plane that “looks over the horizon of its ground forces and reports on that which is yet “invisible” to those ground forces. Christians have an “eye in the sky” who sees [and controls] that which is beyond our sight, reach, control, knowledge, and imagination. Whether it be physical health or spiritual preparedness, the Lord will prepare us for all things seen and unseen.

Being born again by the Spirit can prepare us for nothing except the hereafter; but walking in the Spirit prepares us [informs, empowers] for the unseen in this life and the hereafter. That sentence is a bit simple and bare-boned, but says what I want to say – that preventive care is available and should be engaged.

30. Isaiah lived dangerously, didn’t he! When he said, “Here I am, Lord, send me” [Is. 6:8] he was taking a calculated risk, a risk in which he calculated that the Lord would control and direct all events. Compare Luke 14:25-35. Isaiah surrendered unconditionally. [What other surrender is there?] Then what did the Lord do? He closed in on Isaiah in order to crush any opposing fears and resistances [read: “selfishness”].

The Lord gives us grace to desire surrender and grace to surrender – Phil. 2:13. Flesh protests, fears paralyze us, but when we eventually lift our arms in surrender He takes over. The results are supernatural because we and they are His.

David Brainerd, a missionary to the American Indians in the early 1700s, who died of tuberculosis at age 29, wrote this to the Lord in his diary: “Here I am, send me; send me to the ends of the earth; send me to the rough, the savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort on earth; send me even to death itself, if it be but in Thy service, and to promote Thy kingdom.”

David’s friend, Jonathan Edwards, published his journal after his death. What may be published about us after our deaths?

31. In Europe the political pendulum has swung to the right. The leftists/progressives/socialists are in the vast minority among nationals. Only 3 % of European Union nationals live under Left-governments. Most recently, in Spain recent elections have given the government to Conservatives by 180 seats to 110. Yet, in Europe spending continues to rise [except for defense], bureaucracies continue to expand, and powers continue to shift from national capitals to Brussels [EU government].

Civil, family, business, and church governments are not our Redeemer, but when they are righteous they bless us – Prov. 14:34.

32. What if the Lord called you to form a religious congregation, that you knew you could not do it by yourself, that you had to join yourself with several others, and that indeed you and they would be the founding elders of that congregation? And, you could see in advance that those friends were a shaky bunch? And, that certain vital ones among them would betray you and the others. And, that you would eventually be left alone to carry the ball? Do you think you would likely pour yourself into the task? That is the commitment needed if the church is to be built, because that sort of material is what the Builder of the church is using. That is the commitment called forth from Him to get it started. It was the commitment required of Him to get His congregation started.

33. One wag says that he has searched far and wide for absolute truth, and has found only two: There is a God, and he is not Him.

34. Much can and should be said about the nature and types of biblically established and blessed authority, such as: the church and elders, the family and parents, the state and the sword, employees and employers, etc. Authority is there to bless the good and discipline the bad. The Lord is a person of order, even though that order is established among equals, such as male and female, olders and youngers, children and adults, kings and servants, etc.

People move from order into chaos when [and usually first] church authority/order declines, then [usually second] family authority/order declines, and then [usually last] state authority/order declines.

35. Keys to determining if a church is fatally ill [even if in the early stage of dying] is whether it sees itself as a home and does not want to change [“Change and I will leave!’] or a mission and must continually change [“If we don’t change I won’t come!”].

36. In what may be called practical matters, biblical shepherds, 1) show a steady, broad, genuine, concern and care of the sheep, 2) watch for and promptly apply themselves in crisis situations, and 3) are willing and able to apply restorative church discipline. I would like to see a study designed to show the receptiveness of church members to this sort of shepherdhood functioning in their lives.

37. Of what and how much value has been the Jew over the past 2,000 years, and before and possibly after? Although the first answer to that question may seem to be “none,” that is a risky and wrong guess. It is risky because it can indicate that we do not share in the Lord’s love and ongoing purposes for natural Israel – at least to be called “softening the church’s attitude, aligning our thinking, and multiplying our benevolence toward the children of Abraham and the children of God’s promises.”

 That first answer, “none,” is also wrong. Dispersed Israel, and now re-gathered Israel, has been used by the Lord to stand out alone against the world as a standard of righteous difference: their world practiced human sacrifice, the Jews did not; the Greeks practiced infanticide, the Jews did not; the Greeks worshiped the human body, the Jews taught that the soul is supreme; the Romans enjoyed the sight of wild animals and gladiators killing the helpless, the Jews did not do such; Germany elected and supported a maniac who murdered 6,000,000 people, the Jews did not do such; the crusaders killed thousands of Jews and Muslims during the Crusades, the Jews did not do such; modern day terrorists terrorize and murder to control nations, the Jews do not. So how are those “the Jews do not” so important in answering the question about the value of the Jews over the millennia?

The word Hebrew means “one who descended from Heber.” Heber [“Ivri” in Hebrew] means “one who has passed over,” such as “to the other side.” The Jews stood for monotheism, they had a living God, they produced life, they lived in community, and they showed compassion. The world around them [except for the church when the church stood with the Lord], in which the Jews had been dispersed, lived in darkness to which the Jews stood in sharp contrast. The whole world was on the other side, while Israel had passed over, and stayed over. Judaism, scattered, was God’s tool of resistance to the flow of hate, rebellion, and vain imaginations of the world. It has been a burr under the blanket of every nation, as it still is today. Its stand against majority rule has been costly; it has provoked antagonism.

All of that sounds like the job of the church, doesn’t it! Israel has plowed rocky ground for the church. We should be thankful.

38. The dew of heaven is a common type/shadow/example/revelation in Scripture of the nurturing, empowering Holy Spirit. In dry places the morning dew on plants and tents and rocks is the source of water for animals, being their daily source of life. It’s obvious that the animals and their shepherds must arise early in the mornings, before the heat of the day leaves them dry and lifeless. As we search for the Lord early, He may be found before the dryness of the day consumes us. In Genesis 27:28 Isaac blessed Jacob with the dew of heaven. In Deuteronomy 33:13 Moses blessed the tribe of Joseph with that heavenly dew, as he did all Israel in v. 28. David appreciated the dew of Hermon, which was reliable and life-giving. In Hosea 14:5 the Lord promises to anoint Israel with the dew of heaven so abundantly that Israel’s roots would sink deep and produce beautifully. Micah [5:7] saw the remnant of Israel among the nations distributing the grace of God by the Holy Spirit like dew and like showers.

Then, as if to speak His final prophetic word upon Israel, the world, and the Holy Dew of Heaven, the Lord showed Zechariah [8:12], “For there will be peace [real and final peace and completeness on earth as in heaven] for the seed [God’s word, Son, saints]: the vine [Jesus, church] will yield its fruit [God’s full purposes for creation], the land [Promised Land, world, creation] will yield its produce [all will be in Christ], and the heavens [the Creator] will give their dew [eternally abiding Holy Spirit]; and I will cause the remnant of this people [the redeemed] to inherit all these things.”

If I live to be 100, I suspect that I will be looking for the Lord’s fulfillment of His word every day, and it’s dramatic fulfillment any day.

Rest on those crosses, saints.