THOUGHTS OF JULY, 2013

1. Alexander Cruden [1699-1770], he of Cruden’s Concordance, suffered greatly within and without during his spiritual labors. His story is in the front of his concordances and I think you will be blessed in reading it. Despite those hardships, he managed to write and publish the first complete concordance, as we now know concordances to be.

When he encountered a significant word in the Bible, he defined and commented on it in his concordance. He had good insight spiritually and was a sticker for correct spelling and sentence construction.

Alexander Cruden’s 3 definitions of patience:

a. That grace which enables us to bear afflictions and calamities with constancy and calmness of mind, and with a ready submission to the will of God.

b. A bearing long with such as have greatly transgressed, expecting their reformation.

c. An humble and submissive waiting for an expectation of eternal life and the accomplishment of God’s promises.

2. We already know that if I will humble myself [that’s my job], He will lift me up [that’s His job]. We already know that for Christ to increase, I must [first] decrease [that’s my job]. But do we know that governments will decrease as His government increases? Isaiah saw it – Is. 9:7. I don’t get a clear picture on whether governments must do their decreasing first, but it will get done. It may be that in the millennium people will grow in righteousness so that fewer laws are necessary and we therefore will have less civil government.

The Messiah was increasingly shown in the Old Testament through His acts, words, types and shadows, and appearances. Then He was made flesh and dwelt among us. Now we have His Spirit poured out on believers. All of that has increased His government, which is in the hearts and minds of believers. Then, every knee shall bow to and every tongue confess Him, apparently during the millennium. After that, in ages to come, He is revealed to us more and more, probably requiring less and less earthly government.

We are in a continuum of Christ increasing and us diminishing.

3. Have you noticed in Daniel 3:24-30 that we have there some extra information to be added to our definition of overcomer? An overcomer is one over whose life fires have no power. That should be no surprise to us because the fire has no power over Jesus who is our life, strength and protector. That picture of part of the narrow way agrees with the tremendous reward offered in Revelation 3:21-22.

Overcomers stand in victory. They don’t fight to gain victory. They fight from victory, not for victory. Therefore, overcomers are at rest in Jesus, waging warfare, and praying for God’s will on earth.

Walking in the Spirit instead of in the flesh is a deliberate walk, is it not? We cannot just stroll along going with the winds of life. But, the more successful experiences we have, the more reliable sons we become.

Another word about those fires in our lives. They are designed to take away our sins, which includes our unbelief. Isaiah [6:4-7] benefited that way. In the holiness of God’s presence he knew that his lips had the problem of uttering unclean words. God fixed that problem with a specially chosen fire brand from His fiery reservoir. Your personal testimony and mine show that Isaiah’s treatment was no one-person event.

4. Some are Republicans, some are Democrats, and some are otherwise. How about our becoming Monarchists? Not closet Monarchists, but open Monarchists. We now serve a coming King who will set up an earthly kingdom. Until then, we know that the worse things get, the closer He is to returning – so we are not deceived into giving up. In this meantime, the world cannot help itself. It will continue sliding downward even as we try to prevent the decline. Don’t let that discourage you because we are not called to win at this time; but we are called to stand up for Him – in the political arena and all others.

I have often longed for unity among believers, including in the political arena. I could not understand why Christians could not discern simple right and wrong when it came to politics. Apparently that will have to wait until He returns and sets up His kingdom. That will not be the end of politics. Instead, politics will gradually come under the dominion of King Jesus, meaning locally, state-wide, nationally and internationally.

Patience. The Lord is never in a hurry. Although He is a busy person, He has lots of time. He creates as much of it as He needs to finish His projects.

5. Do you feel guilty when, after trying but being unsuccessful at helping someone, you sadly withdraw from them and leave them to their chosen way and results? Your sadness is shared with the Lord. Eventual withdrawal from obstinate ones is a godly decision, albeit a sad one. See Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 18:4-8; and 22:11-12, especially if you think that the Lord would never do that.

6. This from the pen of C. S. Lewis: “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” When at times and places I have seen Christ being of moderate importance, I have been shocked. Then He showed me myself as I was that day and I understood.

7. There are times when the Lord answers our prayers if they are for others, but not when they are for ourselves. Prayers for others are usually based on a shared life [a thing very pleasing to God] or simple compassion even for strangers [prayer chain, etc.]. Prayers for ourselves can be good, necessary, but so very self-centered.

I think that Jesus’ teaching in Luke 11:5-8 has the small but important attachment of it being a friend going to a friend on behalf of a third friend. That changes the situation, considerably. Without the request being for a third party, the request for midnight bread would have been suspect of being self-centered. Jesus covered that possibility by making the parable about a request for an other person.

8. There are some things that the Lord will not reveal to us [meaning to you or me], but will reveal to another but only after he [that third person] has diligently searched for it – Prov. 25:2. He won’t always conceal it from us simply because we have been bad, or because we cannot be trusted with it, or for some other reason that might seem reasonable to us, but He will reveal it to someone else because it is His to do with as He desires – Heb. 11:33.

That reason should satisfy us, like it satisfied Jesus in Matthew 11:25-26, but we find elsewhere in Scripture [if we have diligently sought] that He follows that satisfying answer with more satisfying answers. That is, perhaps He wants to stir us to righteous jealousy, which is designed to draw the two of us together with the third person so we can get some of that which he got from the Source. That is righteous jealousy at work, and the Lord certainly knows how to stir it.

NOTE: He might also stir our unrighteous jealousy so that we can see it clearly and repent.

Righteous jealousy creates humility, fellowship and unity. Those spiritual qualities draw individuals together. They also draw together the five-fold ministers of God’s word -- Eph. 4:7-16. They also draw together separated congregations and denominations. If you say at this point; “But they are not drawing together,” you have observed how much righteous jealousy there is.

That’s not the only reason the Lord has for revealing His secrets to one and not to others. When He reveals one of His secrets, He requires that we grasp it and live it, even when it is revealed to someone “down the street” – Deut. 29:29. It is a real tragedy that revelations to individuals or groups have not been embraced by others, thus forcing the formation of other separate groups of believers. A good shadow of this process being ordered by a king and being correctly lived is shown in Ezra 6.

9. The Lord is alive, vocal and very intelligent. As such, He is willing to debate anyone. His mind is not limited to the knowledge and reasoning capacity of the human mind – the Western mind-set. His measure of truth is unlimited, yet always simple. That means that the simplest faithful mind is able to receive from Him.

As I have been slowly working my way through 1 Corinthians with my Sunday School class, sometimes taking two lessons to cover one word, I have deliberately not limited my teaching to that which is reason-able. That epistle has little to say to the non-spiritual, reasoning human mind.

In my 49 years of being alive in Jesus, He has supplied me with realms of testimony of the spiritual life, and of its significance and practical application in the Creator’s natural world. The availability of experienced biblical truth has made me secure in my presentations when challenged or simply questioned, because His spiritual evidence bears up under the heaviest of scrutiny.

No situation [job, encounter, etc.] is simply secular to a believer. It should not take a Moses or a Daniel or a Paul to know and experience that! God’s kingdom has come and it is within and among us. His will is able to be done within us in any part of our lives on earth as it is in heaven.

10. One of the proofs of the reality and reliability of love is its sacrificiality – John 3:16. When our fellowship is valuable enough that we will sacrifice time, money, prestige, or health for it we will have begun to walk in the light together, openly, with integrity and accountability.

11. Humility is powerful and very valuable. It can produce the greatest of results. However, it is risky. If it does not spring from true faith, its result may be disaster. Self-exposure is one such painful disaster.

12. I have often stated that we are being given frequent report cards on how we are doing with the Lord, they being our obvious relationships with others. God is invisible and may seem “distant,” so we can be fooled into thinking we are doing well with Him when we are really not doing that well. So, we have visible and present humans with us to act as unconcealed report cards on how we are doing with the Concealed. That’s 2 John 4:20.

13. Little children do not know much, and they don’t want to know much. They go through a stage when they ask lots of questions, but those require only simple answers. Almost any partial answer will satisfy them. They don’t need to know the meaning of life or what type of job they can expect down through the years. They are hardly interested in tomorrow or later today, or that the family has a financial problem, or that grandma is old and will not live much longer. Ten minutes away is about their limit of interest in the future. They live in the here and now and expect their parents to always have and be the answers to their needs.

And here is one of the best parts: they are trusting and malleable. Their souls are soft and being formed. Jesus said we must receive the kingdom of God as a little child or by no means will He accept us into it – Luke 18:17. Do you recall your entrance into the kingdom? No doubt, it was “as a child.”

14. I think that the more one prays in private, the shorter are his public prayers, and the more meaty his public prayers are. Long public prayers are often so that we can mention all the conditions of the group. That makes it dangerously easy to be praying to be heard by people – Matt. 6:5. When we slide into that, we don’t really mean that little postscript, “I pray this in the name of and for the sake of Jesus.” What those words to our heavenly Father are supposed to mean is that we are representing His Son Jesus in our approach to the throne of grace.

The right kind of prayer changes the person and group praying. Things and people are changed. I often have the feeling that Jesus prayed less often for things and people than for Himself. He did that in regards to Peter’s eminent failure, when He prayed for Peter’s post-sin recovery. If someone has the time and inclination to do a gospels count on that, I will appreciate receiving your results.

15. This Thought began as a handout in our Friday evening Bible Study last week. I include it here, with enlargements. Although I know each of you fairly well, meaning that you have forgiven everyone on your “list,” a bit of Holy Spirit stirring for personal introspection will probably be a blessing. Here ‘tis:

To forgive someone is to give them a gift that they do not deserve. Justice says that the offender deserves the opposite, as we do with the Lord. Forgiveness, being a gift, cannot be retrieved. Once given and received by the offender, it belongs to the recipient. It is permanent. Any attempt at retraction shows that the retractor has the character of a thief.

How far is the east from the west – Ps. 103:12? When we forgive someone, that’s how far their offense is from our ever using that [now forgiven] sin against them. We may and should use our knowledge of their sin and frailty for their sakes in positive ways. We no longer hold their offence against them, although it is still in our memory bank. We should remember the sin, but not use that memory adversely on them.

But what about lingering negative feelings after we have forgiven someone? That’s our problem. Repent.

Forgiveness cannot be earned, like a wage or a reward. When you see someone trying to earn his forgiveness, help him get out of that mess. There are many who are glad to let an offender work for his forgiveness, but that is not forgiveness. Having paid their debt, they don’t then need forgiveness. If I owed you $10.00, and you forgave me the debt, I would owe you nothing [except love, which I owe everyone].

Why bother forgiving others? Answer: We are Monarchists, citizens of a kingdom whose King commands us to forgive others. We want to obey Him, and He is coming soon to check on our behavior.

What if an offender is not penitent? Answer: Nurture the forgiveness in your heart until the offender repents and asks for forgiveness. Pray for and love him. Ordinarily, the offender sees what is going on. Leave room for the Lord alone to work – Rom 12:20.

It is true that offenders may need to prove themselves before they are reinstated, but not before they are forgiven. Persons can be forgiven while yet their offence is to be dealt with. When a brother sins and repents he is to be forgiven, then before being placed again in his challenging situation be worked with to strengthen his weakness.

Also, restitution is not for the purpose of being forgiven, but to 1) restore wholeness to the rightful owner, 2) show forth true penitence in the offender, 3) touch the offender with the seriousness of his act, and 4) by example, to warn others of the cost of sinning and thus prevent their sinning.

Both givers and forgivers are rich. “Give and it shall be given you” – Luke 6:38. There is also a real payoff when we forgive someone – “Forgive and you shall be forgiven” – Matt. 6:14. Forgivers enrich the kingdom.

Notice that the opposite also is true in Matthew 6:15 if we do not forgive others. I think that everyone prays every day in one form or another, so forgiving is important to us that we may also be forgiven and receive answers to our prayers – 1 Pet. 3:7.

Forgivers are lovers – 1 Cor. 13:7. They are good company and valuable friends. They have lots of grace, meaning they give to others at their own expense, although we others do not deserve it.

“Overlooking” another’s sin is a special form of forgiving. It must be mixed with wisdom, not neglect or passivity.

How complete is our forgiveness of others? How about doing some form of helpful follow-up after forgiving someone – 1 John 1:9? Help them develop strength in their weak spots, as the Lord does us.

Not forgiving others is common with those who do not forgive themselves, causing self-destruction of soul, body, finances, etc. It’s not fun to be around those who dislike themselves and are self-destructing.

In summary, the lives of forgivers flow with order and life, even though the same bad things may happen to them as happen to non-forgivers, whose lives are often bumpy, judgmental, isolated and disorganized.

Matthew 19:25-26 is appropriate here.

16. I think the Lord wants us to be precocious spiritually, meaning to reach out in faith and call things into existence that do not yet exist – Rom. 4:17. If so, He also wants us to call things into “non-existence,” meaning to yield to us, to fail or go away while they are yet prevailing. It takes knowledge and faith for us to live beyond ourselves, precociously.

In Mark 11:12-14, 19-25 the Lord cursed the fig tree because it did not have fruit out of season. He was expecting the impossible from that tree, as He does from us. When the fig tree withered, He began speaking to His disciples about their having faith to move mountains. He was telling them to speak things that do not exist into existence. If we do not faithfully abide in Him during the impossibles of life, we too will wither. That’s the message of the cursed fig tree, as it was to the Jews of Jesus’ time.

Faith and knowledge are not the only requirements for speaking precociously. He wants us to have good character, so we will be able to receive without getting puffed up.

17. Those first Christians did not have the New Testament. They had “only” the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit and the apostles’ teaching [which here we will call “the Gospels”]. Perhaps that is why they did not immediately go out into the entire world – Matt. 28:16-20. They stayed together for 13 years building up their new faith in Jerusalem until they were run out of town by persecution – Acts 8.

How do you think we would have done in their place? We have many brothers and sisters in the world who have not heard much of the apostles’ doctrine and who have never seen any part of the Bible. They heard Jesus preached and began following the Holy Spirit. I suppose they have a sanctified imagination that can receive the Spirit’s leadership. God bless them.

18. Ernest Shackleton , 1874-1922, most famous for his exploration of Antarctica, stated; “Difficulties are just things to overcome, after all.”

19. God bless Isaiah! [And He has, plus many millions of us who have read him.] Isaiah’s is an amazing book, is it not? He not only got his facts from God, but he felt the power and passion of God. He had to have lived a life close to the One whom he heard say things like: “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure’” – Is. 40:9-10.

Allow me to list just a few more things that are outstanding in and about Isaiah:

a. New Testament writers quoted Isaiah more than all the other Old Testament prophets combined.

b. An entire copy of the book of Isaiah was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of 972 texts found in Khirbet Qumran [West Bank] between 1946 and 1956. That was Holy Spirit preservation.

c. Isaiah’s book is filled with prophecies, including some about Israel’s coming Messiah, describing in detail Jesus’ crucifixion 700 years before it happened – 7:14-16; 9:1-7; 11:all; 32:1-5; 42:1-7; 50:4-8; 52:13-15; 53:all; 61:1-3; and 65:17.

d. Isaiah [44:24 –> 45:mostly every verse] wrote about Cyrus the Great 100 years before Cyrus was born, and 150 years before Cyrus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy of taking the magnificently great and fortified city of Babylon, and how Cyrus did it. The story: It was 539 B.C., on the night King Belshazzar, co-regent with his father Nabonidus, was interrupted during his drunken feast [see Daniel 5:all]. A hand writing on the wall told Belshazzar that his time was up. When Daniel interpreted the writing for Belshazzar, the fearfulness of the event so frightened Belshazzar that “his hip joints went slack,” meaning that he messed in his pants. Even Belshazzar’s mess was prophesied by Isaiah [45:1]. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, Cyrus diverted the course of the Euphrates River, making the river level drop and giving the invading forces the ability to enter the city that night through the river bed. No one noticed them coming, and the city gates that opened onto the river were not closed. The Persians just walked into town – Is. 44-45.

e. Within a year, Cyrus declared that all the Jews who were captive in Babylon were free to return home to Jerusalem [Is. 45:13], as described in Ezra 1.

20. We in the Western world have highly mechanized and impersonalized everything that we can, compared to the Eastern world. In the East, shepherds lead their sheep, calling them by name, and their sheep follow. John 10:11 is one record of that Eastern method. In the West we whistle, punch, and use dogs and ATVs to move them. Is this a possible allegory for the church? Jesus gave Himself to His sheep face-to-face. Shepherding is a “very personal” ministry, which the sheep are seeking.

21. Following the Lord makes the unredeemed parts of us die. Since that can happen at any time, we are told to have our crosses at the ready. Some of those opportunities catch us by surprise, don’t they?

22. Check yourself in the following: 1) the Lord moves in mysterious ways, 2) He is always moving, 3) He is always moving in my life, and for my good, 4) I can now see His movement in my life, including in my problems, and 5) I know He longs to guide me through all situations.

As one son says; “Life is good.” He has a grasp on the presence, power and love of God.

23. When Jesus said in John 6:63; “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing,” He was talking of the Holy Spirit who is available to communicate with us, change us, fill us, lead us, and empower us for everything from the smallest to the largest of tasks. The faithful are to receive that Holy Spirit, as Jesus taught us in Luke 11:13.

He was not talking about the spirit that God puts within every “glob of flesh,” making “it” a physically alive person, even if “it” is as-yet physically dependent upon another human being called “Mom.” That initial and human spirit is placed there “universally and routinely” by the Lord without anyone’s faithfulness or request so that the “glob” can be born having human life, then breathe and grow physically and mentally – John 1:9.

That human spirit [Rom. 1:18-32] enables us to perceive that there is a god-being bigger than ourselves, and from that insight begin a deliberative process of evaluating good and evil and make choices between the two in relation to our god. That is the beginning of the development of our conscience -- Gen. 3:22.

Our human spirit also enables us to have simple insights into very basic spiritual matters, and produces the condition of self-responsibility before our “god.” At that point in our individual existence we are unregenerate sinners, not yet joined with the one true God through faith, still alienated from Him, not yet having received the regenerating Holy Spirit. However, as you have noticed, it is not necessary for unregenerates to remain atheists.

Our human spirit informs us not only of the existence of some sort of god but also of His requirements of basic human functionality. That information system, or conscience, continues being formed by natural and spiritual forces which mold us into someone who is usually acceptable to our society. That situation is stated in Romans 1:18-21.

There, then, is set up the conflict between two dynamics -- the god-related, evaluating conscience and the resolute, self-centered self-will. That murderous rebel, Satan, heavily influences our self-will as he works to mold and harden the conscience into an as equally rebellious condition as his.

It was because of our helplessly-alienated-from-God condition in the weakness of human thinking and acting, motivated by our self-centered human spirit, subject to invisible evil forces of Satan and his other fallen angels, that God sent His Son Jesus to now redeem many of the world’s individuals [Rom. 9:14-24], and eventually all of the world’s political systems, to be called the kingdom of God. Those currently not redeemed remain in their human flesh condition as described above.

Those souls who are redeemed fall into two categories – one group is pressing on, being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, needing and receiving forgiveness and cleansing daily for their many sins – 1 John 1:9. The other group of redeemed ones continues more or less in the flesh, insensitive to the presence, availability and activity of the Holy Spirit, relying upon the best of human logic, blindly subject to the forces of evil.

24. “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.” When the flesh battles against flesh, the victory goes to the strongest flesh. There is always someone stronger that you when you rely upon the flesh. Therefore there is no true rest or confidence in the flesh. Anger, anxiety and stress await those who choose the flesh.

Choose Jesus and the rest He provides.

25. If someone is a genuine complainer, their lamentations will show most clearly at certain times for what it often is, illogical and simply silly. One such example is the person who regularly ate at a restaurant and said that the food there was terrible, and that they served such small portions. Strike 3! Selah.

It is helpful to listen to ourselves speak. (Beware! Others have already been listening.) Ask and the Holy Spirit will help us hear that which He hears.

26. The difference between preaching and teaching is that preaching prepares the ground of our souls to be receptive to the Holy Spirit. Teaching informs the prepared ground of the truth, the life and the way. Properly prepared ground only needs to hear the truth about life and to be pointed toward the way.

27. A spiritual leader here in Corpus Christi, D. K., who is one who has accepted spiritual responsibility for the city and the associated Coastal Bend of Texas, delivered the following to a gathering of area church leaders yesterday. It needs no further introduction and no summation.

IT WAS 1519 WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD FIRST SPOKE INTO WHAT WE CALL THE COASTAL BEND. THE SPANISH EXPLORER ALONZO ALVAREZ DE PINEDA DECLARED THIS AREA TO BE CORPUS CHRISTI, THE BODY OF CHRIST. WE DECLARE THAT THAT NAME IS STILL OF THE FATHER’S HEART, AND OF HIS DECLARATION.

IN SPITE OF THE CHANGES WE HAVE SEEN OVER THESE 494 YEARS, WE DECLARE TODAY THAT THE WORD OF GOD SAYS, “ASK ME, AND I WILL MAKE THE NATIONS YOUR INHERITANCE” AND THAT GOD SAID THAT HE WOULD “SUBDUE NATIONS.”. WE ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THE FATHER AND HIS WORD WHICH SAYS, “BE STILL, AND LISTEN,” THAT WE WOULD KNOW THAT HE IS GOD. WE DECLARE THAT GOD’S WORD SAYS THAT “HE WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE NATIONS AND BE EXALTED UPON THIS EARTH.” THEREFORE, WE DECLARE THAT THE WHOLE OF THIS COASTAL BEND WILL “CLAP THEIR HANDS AS ONE BODY AND SHOUT TO GOD WITH THE CRIES OF TRIUMPH AND JOY.”

I DECLARE THAT I HAVE SEEN IN THESE LAST YEARS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US BIBLE BELIEVING COMMUNITY LEADERS, AND WE GIVE WITNESS TO THIS TRUTH, THAT GOD HAS RAISED UP LOCALLY OR BROUGHT TO US THROUGH MUCH PRAYER, LEADERS SUCH AS:

COUNTY JUDGE LOYD NEAL

MAYOR NELDA MARTINEZ

CITY MANAGER RON OLSON

POLICE CHIEF ROBERT ROCHA

A MAN OF GOD, STEVE WOERNER, TO DIRECT THE DRISCOLL CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL

A MAN OF GOD, CAPTAIN DAVE EDGECOMB TO COMMAND THE NAVAL AIR STATION, CORPUS CHRISTI

PRESIDENT OF DEL MAR COLLEGE, DR. MARK ESCAMILLA [and a long list of others – ed.]

A MIGHTY ARMY OF MISSIONARIES AS PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS AND WORKERS

WE DECLARE GOD’S WISDOM AND GRACE WHEN HE PLACED A MAN OF THE WORD, DARRELL COLEMAN, AS PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER OF OUR CORPUS CHRISTI CALLER-TIMES.

WE SEE AND DECLARE THAT YOU ARE RAISING UP AND BRINGING IN MORE GODLY LEADERS.

WE DECLARE THAT WE WILL LOOK AT OUR REGION, THE BODY OF CHRIST, AS ONE BODY, ONE CHURCH, AND ONE KINGDOM.

WE DECLARE THAT WE HAVE KINGDOM HEARTS, KINGDOM EYES, KINGDOM VISIONS AND DREAMS.

WE WILL LIFT UP THIS ONE BODY BEFORE THE FATHER AND DECLARE THAT HE IS AT WORK IN OUR TERRITORY AND THE CHURCH OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

WE DECLARE THAT GOD IS BRINGING TO US FROM AROUND THE WORLD THOSE OF OTHER RELIGIONS, THE NEEDY, THE DECEIVED, THOSE IN BONDAGE, THE SICK, THE LAME, THE POOR, AND THAT WE WILL LOVE AND EMBRACE THEM AND WITNESS THEM DELIVERED, HEALED, AND ARISING AND DECLARING THAT GOD IS GOD AND THAT JESUS IS LORD.

NOW, JESUS, WE DECLARE THAT WE WILL NOT CRITICIZE ANY PART OF YOUR BODY OR WHAT YOU ARE DOING IN OUR NEIGHBORS AND OUR NEIGHBORING CHURCHES.

WE WILL LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES AND WE WILL WASH THEIR FEET AND ONE ANOTHER’S FEET.

FATHER, WE ACCEPT THE URGENCY OF PAUL TO TIMOTHY WHEN HE WROTE THAT OUR PRIORITY IS TO REQUEST, PRAY, AND INTERECEDE WITH THANKSGIVING FOR OUR LEADERS AND THOSE IN AUTHORITY OF OUR TERRITORY AND THAT YOU WOULD RESPOND TO US WITH A PEACEFUL AND QUIET COMMUNITY, THAT WE WOULD EXPERIENCE GODLINESS AND HOLINESS IN OUR TERRITORY, AND THAT THIS WOULD BE PLEASING TO YOU, LORD JESUS OUR SAVIOR.

WE AGREE WITH YOU FATHER THAT YOU WANT ALL MEN TO BE SAVED AND COME TO A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH. THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN US. THAT IS JESUS CHRIST, OUR LORD.

WE AGREE THAT WE LIVE IN THE PROPER TIME FOR THE REVELATION OF THIS PROCLAMATION.

DO IT, LORD!

AMEN.

28. How can we experience more of God’s flowing [vs. trickling] blessings? See Genesis 6:22. Righteous Noah had no way of making God’s word come to pass. God had not said, “Noah, if you will build a boat I’ll send a flood. Noah knew what God purposed to do and “simply” did what he was told. Being obedient did not make God’s word happen, but it allowed for some of the blessed effects that God wanted from that which He was about to do.

The Lord will deny no request that is in line with what He plans to do, or not do. That which He originates, He will finish, fill up and top off. And He is a communicator with those who want to hear – John 10:4, 27.

29. “Right is right, no matter if everyone is against it; wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.” -- William Penn, 1644-1718, British and American statesman and philosopher. Lord, give us clear-minded, clear-speaking and clear-acting righteous leaders like brother W. P.

30. Isaiah [32:1-8] described the type of men who have been/are/will be “men of the future.” That prophecy speaks directly to the time of the millennium when the Lord [King] Jesus reigns on earth, when overcomers [princes] reign with Him in Jerusalem. This Thought is that those princes had to be faithful men before they entered the millennium, when they lived on earth. That was required. Thus they developed those character qualities while they were earthbound humans. Of course, some of you who are now reading this edition of THOUGHTS are still here as earthbound humans.

Look at those qualities. They rule justly – v. 1. They draw to themselves those who are being tossed about in the storms of life and give them succor [addicts, perverts, poor, lame] – v. 2. They reveal the gospel in word, deed and character – v. 3. They clear confusion from the minds of the bewildered and lying – v. 4 - 5. They show the political and religious how to care for the needy – v. 6. Evil people are disarmed of their wickedness because of the wisdom and strategy of these noble ones – v. 7-8.

I plan and hope to grow in all of those character qualities before I leave this earth. How? By God’s grace and by applying myself to consume it.

If you must have the opposite picture, that of God’s leaders going to Egypt [the world] for counsel, read a few verses into Isaiah 30.

31. I am blessed to be a part of a local church’s prayer chain. Every day a dozen or so prayer requests and praise reports come from that church’s prayer ministry by e-mail. I prayerfully respond to each one. They are a faithful bunch and the Lord is responding to them, as they are to Him. More and more people from Corpus Christi, the nation and the world who are not directly associated with the church are requesting that ministry’s prayer for all sorts of needs.

Probably the most outstanding lack that I have noticed is that, while many of the requests are for commonly important needs, many are also for peace or relief of anxiety, or other sorts of insecurity of soul while going through difficulties. I certainly am acquainted with those elements of unrighteousness, so I can have compassion for those who have similar weaknesses.

My Thought here is that asking and receiving is not based simply on our need, but on our confidence that the Lord is in control of everything so we are going directly to Him with our communiqué. If we have that foundation of truth laid in our souls, we can have confidence that He is with us, that He has purpose in every action, that He is in control, and that when things continue to go “bad” He is still in charge. That covers every detail of our lives so we can always remain at rest [Heb. 3 & 4].

32. I was asked today, “What do you see as the condition of the church in Corpus Christi?” My easy answer was, “It’s immature.” Then we had a discussion about what is church immaturity. My understanding of immaturity was helped by the Holy Spirit’s presentation of the mature church in Scripture, my experience of some years in a powerful church with mature leadership, my successes and failures while raising 5 sons and others while in their preteens and teens and by my involvement in adult discipleship relationships.

Immaturity wants its way -- now! It is impatient and self-centered. It is easily offended and strikes back if it can get away with it. It is disjointed and self-directed. It rejects authority. It withdraws or fights without self-restraint. As I thought about it, immaturity can be well-described as the opposite of 1 Corinthians 13, the “love chapter.”

Our conversation went along several rabbit trails, such as: 1) “Who dares make that judgment?” and 2) “No one actually knows but God.” By the time we had listened to well-meant concerns about the question itself and its possible answers and had responded biblically we had laid the groundwork for talking about how immaturity happens, persists, is taught and encouraged by the church, and is thought to be the healthy norm [which it is not] instead of the debilitating average [which it is].

We imagined the situation of a newly formed, seeker-friendly church of mostly new believers, how they could be “met where they are” in their newness, supplied with modern facilities and worship, and over the years lack being discipled [Matt. 28:19-20] into mature [Col. 1:28] overcomers [Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21] by walking the way of the cross [Matt. 16:24-26] together in the love of Christ.

We have hardly started. We meet again next week.

33. Jesus came to reform the basics of the entire religious system. Martin Luther’s revelation of “justification by faith alone” was a reformation of one aspect of theology. The Wesley brothers brought a revelation of personal intimacy with Jesus Christ. Every outpouring of the Holy Spirit since Jesus’ time has brought with it an important revelation that was only a part of that which it seems the religious system of the time could have used. If that observation on my part is accurate, I confess to not knowing why the Lord of the church would do it that way. Perhaps we could tolerate only one basic renewance at a time and that our love for Him and one another would eventually enable Him to piece the parts together into one complete and glorious church. We shall see.

Perhaps Jesus was the only individual who could see the whole picture and yet deal with its essence and segments. That was Jesus’ mission. It would be ours also, and we could accomplish it if we were united. Jesus’ message was, “Repent, because the kingdom of God has come.” Even when He dissected and particularized His message, it continued to boil down to a more perfect and pure revelation – the love of God. That’s a good message and is appropriate at all times, especially when we think we don’t need it.

If we are indeed in the time of the end, the next outpouring of the Holy Spirit will focus us on purity and love for Jesus. As in all of the preceding outpourings, established religious organizations will oppose it. Where they cannot stop the message and its effects, they will attempt to organize it under their control. Those in control of Satan’s most effective resources [power, finances and control], will feel threatened, and they will be right. Lacking Holy Spirit LIFE, that which they offer will be inadequate for Jesus’ sheep. The Great Shepherd will feed them elsewhere.

Fear not, little flock. It is the Father’s good intent to give you the kingdom. The LIFE cannot fail.

34. How are we spiritually progressing in the following statement? “A miracle is only a natural happening.” That’s one of our targets, is it not? Miracles are natural happenings in the realm of the Spirit – in which we normally walk and live. They are operative through spiritual force. Therefore the one who more and more is walking [thinking, acting, perceiving, relating, and responding] in the Spirit considers miracles to be natural, common and reasonably expected. Jesus considered them natural, common and to be expected. On the other hand, the one who is walking in the flesh [even in the goodness of human flesh] considers miracles to be contrary to nature, not a natural happening. Then there are those who do not believe in miracles at all.

35. I have shared a Thought before about the necessity of having an imagination before we can have faith, because faith abides in our imagination. Greater faith springs from a greater imagination. Things of our imagination certainly can be real or unreal. Without an imagination scientists would have nothing to say or do. Their imaginations reach out beyond the things already in our grasp and appropriate more from what others cannot imagine. They imagine the impossible, consider them possible, labor to firm them up into the material realm, and then into usefulness.

For millennia we imagined how it would be to fly in the air. We designed all sorts of contraptions, and eventually flew. Now millions fly every day, having faith that they will live through the event. Some will not fly because they don’t believe they will survive. Those who cannot imagine that they will survive simply don’t exercise simple faith. Their negative imagination is greater than their positive one.

Albert Einstein [1879-1955], a non-observant Jewish, German-born, naturalized American, theoretical physicist, said, “The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge, but imagination.” True intelligence is not limited to science, the arts, and other highly imaginative fields, but those areas are loaded with imaginative, highly intelligent people. I think that spiritual and religious people have the biggest and richest imaginations, especially when the Holy Spirit begins His mind-stretching work of revelation. The greater our imaginative ability, the more we can see, feel, hear and deal with from the Spirit. His limitless mind is so far out from our small mind that only a dangerous imagination [like Paul’s, according to Peter – 2 Pet. 3:15-16] and holy revelation [like God’s] can move further into the truth of God, be it science, arts, spiritualities, or whatever.

36. The Lord encourages righteousness by telling us that He will answer our prayers when, 1) we husbands love and properly live with and honor our wives [1 Pet. 23:7], 2) we forgive those who sin against us [Matt. 6:14], and 3) clean up our acts, meaning stop our evil deeds, do good, seek justice, reprove the ruthless, defend the orphans, and plead for the widows [Is. 1:15-17]. Jesus called all of that “abiding in Him and His word abiding in us” [John 15:7]. Now that we know, …..

37. Satan could not kill God, so he set about killing those whom God made in His image [Gen. 1:27], mostly by getting us to do the job for him. Cain killed Abel [Gen. 4:8] because he [Cain] had an evil heart that would not yield to God. The death of one who was created in God’s image was so painful to God that He forbad the application of capital punishment to Cain.

Later, when murderers needed to be dealt with, God set up capital punishment – Gen. 9:5-6. It seems that from that point onward joint responsibility for capital punishment was vested in corporate society, or vested in a family member of the deceased as an “officer” of the society [Num. 35:9-34]. Later, with the development of what we now know as civil government, it became a responsibility of those civil governments, no matter the nation’s righteousness or unrighteousness [Rom. 13:1-5].

Jesus taught us that hatred in any of its forms brought death into a relationship and upon one or more persons, at least into/upon the hater and the hated – 1 John 3:15; James 4:1-3; Prov. 18:21. Today there are many who are against capital punishment, while seemingly-unrelated hatred is rising.

Death is death, whether it is killing one’s reputation, killing his relationship with his money or other property, killing his body, etc.

38. The Holy Spirit is at work among God’s people, doing specifics for individuals and generics meant for all of us. One general thing He is doing is growing us up spiritually.

Would you like to take a test to measure your spiritual growth? On a scale of 0 to 100 here is your opportunity to plumb the depths of truth about your soul. 1) You have been a Christian for at least 25 years -- 0 points. 2) You have been involved in the church for at least 30 years -- 0 points. 3) You have been involved in high-level church work and ministry for at least 35 years -- 0 points. 4) You have not missed church or a day of Bible reading for 20 years -- 0 points. 5) You have more knowledge of the Bible than anyone else in your church -- 0 points. 6) You have exercised all of the spiritual gifts for 20 years -- 0 points. What’s your score?

But let’s continue: 7) John 3:30 is active in your soul -- 50 points. 8) You have moved through focusing on the learning of biblical facts, are now moving through studying the types, shadows and coordination of those facts, and are being stirred onward by the revelation of Jesus in all of Scripture -- 50 points.

Congratulations, spiritually growing saint; you made 100.

39. I am surprised at how faithful we can be while not knowing the truth or with knowing only part of the truth; and then how finding another nugget of truth increases our faith and faithfulness. More information or correct information is not essential to faith, but it helps. Finding truth really stirs the soul. On the other hand, ignorance can be a blessing.

40. When a woman marries, she receives another name. She has become one with her husband and has her husband’s name called upon her. As members of that type of covenant, she loses her identity in order to be found in him in all ways, including name. They are of one flesh and have a common identity.

The Lord shares His identity and name with His covenant children. He did the same with Abraham and Sarah when He established the practice of circumcision with them. Their names were changed, mostly by having AH [from YAHWEH, His name] added to their names. Abram became Abraham and Sarai became Sarah. Also, the meanings of their new names changed so drastically from the meanings of their original names that they were faced by God’s prophetic word all day every day thereafter. Abram means exalted father, and Abraham means father of a multitude. Sarai means lady, and Sarah means princess of a multitude. Thereafter they called one another by God’s promises – they pronounced God’s promises upon one another when they spoke one another’s name, as did others to them. What a reminder!

So how does that apply to us? Look what we have been offered. In Revelation 2:17 and 3:12 we are offered new names, other than the one we were given at our natural birth [Bob, for me] and our spiritual birth [Christian, for all saints]. There will be a special covenant, union, and reward for those who overcome in this earth-life in the ways God’s standards require in those verses. That offer is for now, and will be rewarded in the millennium [and thereafter?]

Saints, the riches of Christ for our glorious futures are there for the trusting and obeying.

41. There are ways and reasons to enter a ministry, select a mate, accept a job, etc. Most Christians want the Lord’s will for themselves, at least in life’s major events. Knowing and trusting the Lord keeps us on track of the truth [like a hound following a scent] in every aspect of our entire life. We may waver between knowing that it is the Lord’s leadership or that it is simply our own desires and decisions that are involved. It’s really nice when all considered factors take us to the same place, conclusion or person.

If not that clear, it may be a matter of our having learned the haphazard technique of itching wherever we want to scratch. The Lord has life-lessons for us even when we do that. As Eleanor Roosevelt [1884-1962], wife of American president Franklin D. Roosevelt, said: “People grow through experience if they meet life honestly and courageously.” Everything has meaning and purpose and can fertilize the ground of life.

IN CLOSING, AN EXERCISE FOR PEACE:

This little exercise can be difficult for those saints who are hard on themselves for not being and doing more like Jesus. This may help with a little digging in your soul so you will be able to find a reason for whatever self-condemnation or self-belittlement you have. It starts with a question: “How much of the Lord’s power and anointing do you have?”

We have the tendency to look around us, evaluate the spiritual condition of other Christians, establish for ourselves what is “normal” and decide whether we have much or little of God’s graces. Yet, normal is what the Lord says is normal, which He then applies individually to the saints. When, where and how much His normal for you applies to your being your idea of normal is our Thought here.

So, again, how much of the Lord’s power and anointing do you have? Perhaps it is a matter of His having not given you much. Perhaps you are not using what He has given. Whatever the case, how much of the Lord’s power and anointing do you have? I think that you are the only person who can answer that question for yourself. The Holy Spirit of Truth will certainly help you come close to the absolute truth.

The question is not, “How much of the Lord’s anointing is available to the church and to you,” but how much do you have?” “How much have you been given?” “Much?” “Little?”

Now the purpose of my question: “However much you have, that is all He holds you responsible for using” – Luke 12:48b. Stop comparing yourself to others or trying to reach levels that today are not yours. Do hunger for more. Your part in God’s activities is that which you can do in faith. You will be what He calls “a normal Christian” as you 1) don’t come short of His grace today and 2) do not think or act on more than you should. In the middle of those two boundaries is your normal.

Go in peace.