THOUGHTS OF MAY, 2010

1. It’s a pleasant surprise to read about the spiritual enlightenment of some person back in history whom I thought had surely been a spiritual numbskull. Napoleon Bonaparte is such an example. He said: “Alexander, Caesar, and Hannibal conquered the world but they had no friends … Jesus founded His empire upon love, and at this hour millions would die for Him … He has won the hearts of men, a task a conqueror cannot do.”

 If we are enticed or plan to take a shortcut to success, like Satan offered Jesus [Luke 4:1-13] and Napoleon, we can expect quick results. We won’t have to suffer. We won’t have to be obedient. All of those are shallow, this-life benefits.

 On the other hand, if we choose to go the way of Christ, results may take longer. We will not be able to escape suffering. We will have almost all of our richest and almost unimaginable blessings in the hereafter.

 I can remember having spent some time on shortcuts.

1. As said before, Jesus, the Son of God, was changed forever when He came to earth. He is no longer in His previous Spirit form, but now remains forever in a [very] glorified human form. We will be like Him when we see Him, meaning His bodily form.

 He really did give up a lot, didn’t He! He is now in the form that He purposed for us, but which form we could not attain to except through His human birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. That’s what linked permanently-saved humanity to Him and Him to us. It is difficult to imagine the glory ahead of us, even though He has given us numerous peeks at it.

 Occasionally I enjoy looking at those peeks and enlarging them a bit, holding as much as possible to Scripture. I’m encouraged to do that because I know that there is soooo much partially hidden out there about things in store for us, and it is absolute and permanent reality [1 Cor. 2:9].

1. The Lord is really working in our nearby maximum security prison, and not only in the prisoners. Those who go there to minister are certainly growing spiritually – as, in turn, are their support persons. There is a 4-day “revival” type of event going on at this writing, all done by volunteers. As an example of the commitment of their support personnel:
2. The volunteer men go into the prison Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
3. The volunteer women prepare meals for the men at a local church, but do not get to go into the prison until Sunday afternoon.
4. Of over 3,000 prisoners, only 42 are allowed involvement each “revival.” They work hard on scoring perfectly on good behavior in order to be among the 42.
5. On Saturday, every prisoner in the prison gets a dozen homemade cookies. That’s 3,000

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dozen cookies, all prepared fresh by faithful saints who do not make the trip to the prison.

1. Those 42 prisoners also eat cookies each day during the meetings.

Of course, it’s not just the cookies that show the love of Jesus, but they play their part in the transformation of lives every time this program is put on – several times yearly.

1. Have you ever offered someone a relationship with you and they turned you down? Aside from the rare offers, like marriage, we make relationship offers every day. It should be added that we also do not make relationship offers, withholding ourselves, being satisfied with just knowing someone while keeping our distance. We cannot force [good] relationships. Everyone is free to withdraw or to join us. The results might be surprising if we deliberately deepened several of our relationships. Try sitting down next to an acquaintance and sharing something personal.
2. Today I was talking to a brother in Birmingham, Alabama. We agreed that the older we get the more some of our most vivid memories are things that never happened.
3. We are working on a Kingdom Protocol. Our objectives:
4. Bring people into the kingdom.
5. Perceive strategies and tactics.
6. Plan for success.
7. Increase others’ participation.
8. Place and support godly people in every sphere [government, education, industry, finances, etc.].
9. Minister to the Lord.

We first talked about having a task force for the special problem of the floating church, sometimes called “church hoppers.” At this point, we are considering a frontal approach – identify them, gather them into a group under the pastor, meet often for the purpose of listening to them, together identify their accurate observations and righteous attitudes, then help them identify their inaccurate observations and unrighteous attitudes. Righteously appreciate their ministry to the flock.

It seems to us that the church has a village attitude, but should have a kingdom attitude. We have a king and are (in) His kingdom. The kingdom is one nation. As God’s children we are a holy [not elite] people who bear His name and His likeness. We should learn to keep rank, know and understand our measure of rule, prefer others, forbear with the weak who think they are strong, and receive discipline.

Experienced responders’ responses are appreciated.

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1. The Bible’s Old Testament and New Testament rules/laws for living and ministering are examples of what the Holy Spirit will do with and in us if we will go along with Him. Even as Christians, if we decide [through ignorance or arrogance] to go our own [good] way and do our own [good] thing, we will find that the promises of Jesus are empty, or far and few between.

1. Augustine is reputed to have said something like this about the Trinity: “You lose your mind if you try to grasp it, and you lose your soul if you don’t believe it.”
2. Let’s not be afraid to disagree, even if it leads to a peaceful parting of the way. Remember that Paul and Mark had to separate, which was apparently due to a failure on Mark’s part. However, their separation was peaceful. That enabled their eventual reunion. See Acts 12:12, 25; 15:39; 2 Tim. 4:11; and Philemon 24.

 You know that I am a “unity/restoration at almost any cost” person, so let’s not burn any bridges behind us or others.

1. “A great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It had its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all parts of a civilized community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their laws; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine [in conclusion – ed.] society performs for itself almost every thing which is ascribed to government.” – Thomas Paine, 1791

 Thomas Paine was right, wasn’t he. His image of life together works best among a Christian people, which was his main focus. However, it works among others, also, because his observations are built into man’s soul by man’s creator. When governments apply unnatural pressures and laws upon society, the more that society must live by laws instead of by its natural condition. That destroys a society.

 I have said before that there are many governments in every society – family, private social organizations, civil [federal, state, county, city] the weather [especially to farmers], the church or other religions, the boss on the job, written contracts, the coach, etc. We are governed!

 It may go against the conviction, understanding and [modern] experience of over 90% of the general public, but civil government is meant to be among the least [apparent, intrusive, controlling] of that long list of governments. That’s what Thomas Paine said above.

1. At times I find myself thinking about my future, in “practical” [= earthly, carnal] ways. How do I

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 know it is carnal instead of faithful? Because at those times the Lord and His loving faithfulness are not actively involved in the thought.

 In those seconds or minutes, the Holy Spirit reminds me of two things: 1) Indeed I have made a good commitment, but I have not yet finished fighting the good fight. Indeed I have sought to forsake my life for His sake, have taken up my cross, and have followed Him, but we are not yet home. Then, 2) He reminds me of the Lord’s loving faithfulness, and that He will customize every detail of my life for His glory and for my eternal betterment.

1. When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit on the tree of good and evil, they got exactly what Satan promised them -- the knowledge of good and evil. They were just like God in that limited way. What they did not get was God’s wisdom to know absolute good and evil. That left them and us “hung.” In order to use that knowledge, we have to decide good and evil on our human level, meaning how it appears to affect me/us/creation. Our playing God is absolutely short-circuited. We find ourselves on the same level as any atheist: if it feels good, it is good; if it feels bad, It is bad – governed by a set of righteous laws that do not cover non-moral situations.

 Job had the opportunity to get into that game, for which none of us are equipped. We do have the ability to know God and to trust Him no matter the affect of good or evil. He has told us that He will turn that which we call “bad” to “good” if we will love Him and yield to His hand in the matter. Anyone with even a slight amount of insight has a life-list of bad things that became blessing, and a list of good things that became curses. In our humanity we find it easy to call things good or bad, without having the slightest bit of heavenly insight.

 Thank you, Lord, for requiring faith and withholding other evidences. You are the Masterful One. You are always good. You work all things to your glory and our eternal betterment. We love you and yield to you.

1. Without simply rehashing and bemoaning the moral [etc.] decline in America, and blaming various presentations of government for their imperfections – due to the weakened condition of religion, I thank God that we do have some form of control/government. We are experiencing “the time of the feet and toes.” Remember King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a statue and Daniel’s interpretation. [Contact me if anyone does not know the story.] The independent spirit of mankind has gradually brought us to the time of our being the feet and toes. The slide downward has brought us to the bottom worldwide. The children of light are about to see that evil is necessarily the result of independence from God, and that blindness prevents the children of darkness from seeing that truth.
2. If we cannot hear the word of any of our imperfections [sins, faults, weaknesses], neither can we hear the word of our successes [righteousnesses]. On one hand we will block conviction and

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 repentance; on the other we will manufacture those self-righteousnesses which suit our desires.

1. Today is the National Day of Prayer. Here in Corpus Christi there were many sites designated for group prayer. The Christian Business Association hosted the Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast, which we attended with about 500 others. A whole passel of local leaders were there for a quality spiritual occasion.

 At noontime about 75 of us gathered at the City Hall flagpole for prayer. These Corpus Christians sure do put themselves into their conversations with the Lord. They covered the usual [repentance, unbelief, etc.] and the specific [state and local governments, military, church, family, education, media, business, and the federal government.

 The National Day of Prayer is observed every year, but this year [I am told] there has been more people, more spiritual energy and more expectation.

1. The Lord kept it simple. He tied our love for Him to our obedience to Him. “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” Then He tied our love for our brother to our functional unity with him [John 17:23]. Those two sketches were practical examples of what He meant when He told us to love Him with all of our selves, and to love our brother as ourselves.
2. If you are lonely, stop insulating or isolating yourself.
3. This was too good to not include in THOUGHTS. It was from a patient who found “the bargain of the decade:” 1) His regular physician 2) saw him quickly 3) for a fair cash price, 4) gave him drug samples 5) which were worth more than the price of the office visit, and 6) he was cured of what ailed him. See?!
4. A good mark of maturity is when one is able to talk about and deal with others’ weaknesses/sins/faults with the right people and with the right/life-giving attitude. On the contrary, a mark of immaturity is when one runs from the necessity of dealing with the same, or deals with it indiscreetly or with an unrighteous attitude.
5. Have you also noticed that when old folks try to act young they are absolutely foolish? I can think of things I have heard since I was a boy, like “There’s no fool like an old fool,” and “Act your age.” Nancy and I attended the annual reunion of her high school graduation class a few days ago. Not a few of those78 to 84 year olds tried to act the way they acted in high school. They had the same identity, but everything else was different. Some appeared to be unaware of that.
6. How much of a temptation was it to Jesus when the devil urged Him to jump from the highest point of the temple? If Jesus was walking in the spirit at the time [and He was!] it was no strain

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at all. Yet, what were the points where the devil thought Jesus would have been temptable? Answer: 1) That Jesus was not absolutely sure He was the eternal, uncreated Son of God in created human flesh. 2) That Jesus would accept an isolated promise from Scripture and cast His whole life upon it. 3) That Jesus would see some benefit to providing evidence/proof that the Bible was true. 4) That it would be helpful to His ministry if He could prove from the beginning that He was Whom He said He was – God’s Man of the hour! 5) That God was with Him despite the temptation to believe that the devil’s harassment meant that He has fallen out of favor with His Father. 6) That God was with Him for actions and results. 7) That confidence in the truth of God’s word and faith in His Father needed to be enhanced or replaced by a physical miracle.

 All of those points, and more, were built into the devil’s temptation of Jesus and of us. The temptation that seems most prominent over the past 40 years is to select a Scripture verse or verses and build your life and faith ministry upon it/them.

 I think that had the Lord jumped from the temple He would have indeed been lifted up by angels and landed unharmed. Why? Because throughout Scripture, miracles are granted as a result of faith, often despite personal unrighteousness.

1. The following is borrowed from John 3:16 and from a converted Moslem:

 For God the greatest Lover

 so loved the greatest degree

 the world the greatest company

 that He gave the greatest act

 His one and only Son the greatest gift [Jesus]

 that whoever the greatest opportunity

 believes the greatest simplicity

 in Him the greatest attraction

 should not perish the greatest promise

 but the greatest difference

 have the greatest certainty

 everlasting life. the greatest possession!

1. How many mysteries have you found in the Bible? There are lots, probably about 20. A mystery in the Bible is something the Holy Spirit kept and may still be keeping [or keeping in part] from us. Here are several:
2. The end of Israel’s spiritual blindness – Rom. 11:25.
3. The church – Eph. 5:32.
4. The mystery of iniquity – 2 Thess. 2:7.
5. The rapture, its timing and events – 1 Cor. 15:51-53.

Biblical mysteries are designed by God, concealed in the Old Testament, and at least partly revealed in the New Testament.

1. These two thoughts are written as a heads-up to everyone, although I am comforted knowing that you are unusually well-informed biblically and from several other reliable sources.

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The word “abomination” certainly does carry with it and can impart a bad feeling. It’s

defined as a detestable quality, act or condition. In Scripture the word is commonly applied to any religion that excludes, 1) man’s sins, 2) God’s holiness and 3) salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The names “Babylon” and “great whore” are attached to that abomination. It is a religious system that belongs to Satan, not to God. That system entices God’s faithful sons and daughters. It/She is a professional harlot with many lovers. As a lady of the night, she works in darkness. She plays fast and loose (with the truth). She is alluring, experienced at her trade, and high priced. All are invited to party with her and enjoy her – no one is excluded. She is broad minded and inclusive. Then, again, it is no surprise that as a home breaker she is jealous of the Bride of Christ.

 Many believe that the abominable harlot as described several places in Scripture is the Roman Church, but it is more likely to be any religion and any part of Christianity that [as above] excludes man’s sins, God’s holiness, and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The Lord has His people in every Christian group, but there is coming a time during the Great Tribulation when He will destroy that Babylon [not that city in Iraq, and not specifically in Rome] which is false religion.

1. While we are thinking about false religions, check Jeremiah 7:18, where God’s people were worshiping and sacrificing to “the Queen of Heaven,” Semiramis. Then see Jeremiah 44, written to the Israelites who had gone to Egypt to escape the Babylonians. They, too, were worshiping Semiramis. Ezekiel [8:14-15] also spoke for the Lord, this time against those who were worshiping Semiramis’ son, Tammuz.

 Semiramis was believed to have been miraculously conceived by Nimrod after he had died. She bore a son, Tammuz. While yet a young man, Tammuz was killed but came back to life as both Tammuz and Nimrod. As mother and son they had a mother and child religious system that, in time, expanded and permeated the entire world. You can see that there was/is a lot of counterfeiting in their story, which I have greatly abbreviated.

 Semiramis and Tammuz were/are also known as Isis and Osiris [in Egypt], Ishtar and Bacchus [in Assyria], Isi and Iswara [in India], Cybele and Deoius [in Asia], Aphrodite and Eros [in Greece], Venus and Cupid [in Rome], and Easter and Cupid in America and other western nations. The names and places changed as one army defeated another, victoriously entered their temples, and returned to their homeland with the defeated nation’s deities. The Queen of Heaven, a satanic, man-made, counterfeit religion is worshiped around the world. As such, she is jealous of the Bride of Christ and will do her best to entice God’s people into intimacy and a long-term relationship with her.

 We are dealing here with evil spirits.

1. Why is it difficult to ask for forgiveness? Pride. Rebellion. Unrepentance. Etc. One of the dynamics involved there is that asking for forgiveness is a plea. A plea comes from a humble heart. It is a request for something unwarranted. We have no right to be forgiven. It is a gift.

 Along that line, have you noticed that we sometimes avoid both confession and asking for forgiveness by simply saying we are sorry? That’s a move in the right direction, but stops short. Besides, when we say we are sorry we expect forgiveness to be automatic, not a gift, and blame the one offended if they don’t forgive us forthright. There is a gap between “I’m sorry” and true restoration.

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1. It has been noticed that within and around Corpus Christi a common question is being asked: “What is happening in Corpus Christi?” They ask that question because they see something or because they have heard from someone who has heard or seen what the Lord is doing here. I and others are delighted to answer. As we answer, more happens.

 Remember Malachi 3:16, which says in part; “Those who feared [revered] the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, …”

1. If you want to be blessed all the way down to the roots of your toes, Google “Principle Approach.” It’s better than I could describe, so I won’t.
2. You will be surprised when you learn who said the following: “An evil exists that threatens every man, woman and child of this great nation. We must take steps to insure our domestic security and protect our homeland.” See Thought No. 33 for the name of the speaker.
3. We are told that as we go through life we are to be aware of what our Father is doing in our environment – meaning within ourselves, within several feet of us, in our families, on our jobs, around us as we drive our cars, in our city and nation, and internationally.

 In Ephesians 5:15 Paul told some great Christians that they were unwise if they did not walk circumspectly. That means that they and we, as children of the light, should understand things and behave as children of God. Why tell us to judge all things [1 Cor 2:15] if He was not going to give us all that it takes to do so?

 Non-Christians all around us don’t know why they and their environment are doing so badly. They despair. They don’t know the answers and have come to the belief that there are no answers to their problems. Indeed, there are no answers as long as they continue on the present course of their lives. Their answer is, “turn around.”

 Early this year we noticed that the Lord had elevated and was still elevating righteous, committed Christians to leadership in our city and county. We initiated regular meetings in private with them so they could be encouraged and supported. That’s an example of “walking circumspectly.”

1. Those who have verbal ministries, lots of experience and understanding – often talk too much. If you love them, in your love tell them the truth.

 Another painful circumstance is met when those who are supposed to be subject to leadership or authority will not fit into the relationship because of a perceived imperfection in the leadership. There being no perfect leader, it is difficult to draw together a body of believers if one is/they are looking for a state of righteousness beyond God’s current grace. You are right; that is only half of the story.

1. The Lord is both predictable and unpredictable. We are to know His ways so that we can get into step with Him. When we do, the results are no surprise. The results were predictable.

 But then, when we next perceive His direction and get into step with Him, He may change direction or simply stop.

 He is the Lord. When He stops, just gather around Him and enjoy.

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1. Answer to question in Thought No. 29: Adolph Hitler, on the creation of the Gestapo.

 The lesson is that in a crisis [real or contrived] governments are quick to seize authority at the expense of a nation’s freedoms, which may not be returned to the people when the crisis is over. That applies to both good and bad governments. It’s the nature of government to gather power to itself at the expense of the people.

1. It is not possible for us to know the cost of the way ahead. If we do not make a 100% commitment to the Lord, the spouse, the job, etc., we will find ourselves re-calculating costs and our commitment at every bump in the road of life.

 Yes, some commitments are for less than 100%. For those less than 100% commitments we should commit ourselves 100% to fulfilling our partial commitment. All commitments should be made and clearly so early-on.

1. God’s love in us is not blind. It forms a bond, looks beyond the present situation and creates a healing environment.
2. How about some hints on molding our prayers. There are many more important things in life than how to word our prayers, but disciples want to be better disciplined in all ways, don’t we? Try to see yourself in Matthew 6:5-8 and Luke 11:1. You already know that answers to prayers come mostly as a result of faith, partly through our abiding, and minimally through our needs.

 Good examples of and teachings on prayer are aplenty in Scripture, but not many bad examples, so let’s manufacture some bads: 1) Don’t beg. You may be asking for something, but He cannot be moved by the unbelief of a beggar. Persistence, yes; begging, no. 2) Skip “please.” The Lord wants genuine humility but persuasive verbal protocols don’t impress Him. 3) Don’t try to make a contract or strike a bargain with Him. There are times when He has brought us to the end of ourselves and we offer Him that which He was after from the beginning, but trade-offs and other bargains don’t sway the One Who has everything and can do anything with His everything.

1. Consider Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 10:23-25 and Luke 18:24-25. Why is it so difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom, how much does it take to make me “rich,” and which kingdom then becomes difficult for me to enter?

 First, it is difficult for a rich person to enter because wealth creates the illusion of control and self-sufficiency, meaning that we feel less needy and more invincible. You may have had the golden opportunity, once your wealth was gone [lost, taken, or voluntarily yielded], to enjoy the completeness of humility and dependence on the Lord.

 Secondly, to define “rich,” it is as much as is required to persuade me to accept that illusion. It may be millions of dollars or some other large amount. Or “rich” may be my having just enough money [etc.] for this month, enough to get by for now, even if it is a hand to mouth existence.

 Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus’ and is pictured in Scripture in a very positive way, but otherwise, when the rich were identified in Scripture as “rich” they were pictured in the negative. James [1:11; 2:6; 5:1] really characterized them negatively. I think James’ reason was

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that the rich Christians were not living the life of love and righteousness that marked the

church’s devotion to Jesus and one another. See Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-37 and many other New Testament references to the needs of the church and its servants, such as was Paul.

 Thirdly, the kingdom is the reign of Jesus over the believer. That means He rules. He speaks and we obey. He writes, we read and we obey. He commands and we obey. He desires and we obey. He leads and we follow. That’s having entered at the narrow gate and walking along the narrow way. It’s not “believing but still standing outside the gate,” or after having entered choosing to step a bit off the path and rest on the grass under the shade. The one kingdom is 1) His rule over us, now by faith in the life of the believer and 2) then by full physical manifestation in the natural in the millennium. The “now” and the “then” are one kingdom, the kingdom of heaven on earth with two different displays and disclosures – the first hidden except to its members, the second to be evident in the natural to everyone.

1. The Lord created the world for liberty. Mankind failed to use that liberty, so fell into bondage to self and the devil. Christians have been released from that bondage and from innumerable secondary bondages into an especially prepared liberty.

 We have now the power to do or to resist doing any particular action. We are free from the curse of the Law [sin absolutely producing death]. We are free from the ceremonial laws. We are free to use all things righteously. We are free from spiritual ignorance and blindness. In short, we are free from the yoke of the law and from slavery to the necessity of sinning.

1. When the Lord begins doing something big, He starts breaking down dividing walls. People, especially His people, begin to unite. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say “He unites His people,” but we see it happening as if people are doing the uniting. The breaking down of walls continues [and I will say it with a mixed heavenly-earthly focus] “until unholy resistance increases sufficiently to end God’s efforts.” Of course, He knows His plans from the beginning and He completes them for each of His operations.

 But unity is only the first big step. From the openness and trust of foundational unity the Lord begins to raise up leaders. Brothers and sisters, if we think that the Holy Spirit did something really great when He broke down walls and began uniting us, just watch what He does in the process of developing leaders and setting them in place among the united ones, and among the mixed multitude [Ex. 12:38; Num. 11:4; Neh. 13:3] present with the united ones!! It’s like trying to regather a flock of chickens back into the chicken pen.

 When the world, the flesh and the devil cannot stop the unifying process, their next effort is toward dissuading organization under His chosen leaders. Remember the Israelites’ reluctance at and rebellion against Moses’ leadership, although Moses’ leadership was highly attested to by Jehovah. The flesh is unrealistic, are we not?!

 The Lord has only imperfect ones to bring into leadership, but even if those leaders are remarkably mature and righteous, they are still imperfect. Their imperfections will be magnified among those who are not in leadership, who have like-imperfections or who have been particularly sensitized to certain imperfections [in others, of course]. These folks will make up the core of the mixed multitude. If leadership continues in faith and productivity, and in the showing of patience to the dissenters, the Lord will deal with the mixed multitude. The narrow road is not only narrow but bumpy, but it leads to life. It is the only way because the other road is known to lead to destruction.

 The Lord is serious about what He is doing here in Corpus Christi [of course]. He has significantly

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broken down walls within and between souls. He has now begun to create desire for unity. But

unity cannot be achieved simply by a call to unity. It is achieved when those who will be united love the Lord and others more than they love themselves.

 It remains to be seen how those whom He has not called to early leadership will respond.

1. It is not the teacher’s job to convince, but to make understandable his message. That is his job. The preacher convinces and persuades, but the teacher must be able to bring understanding to his listeners. If they understand his message, he has done well – even if they do not agree with him. The Christian who teaches Scripture must be able to draw clear pictures and do it logically. It is the Holy Spirit’s business to grant faith and convince of truth. He is the only One Who can, and He may grant it through teaching.
2. Again, the nature of government, civil or otherwise, is to gather power to itself at the expense of freedom of the people under that government. That gathering of power began soon after our nation was born. It took large strides in the 1930s, continued steadily until about 20 years ago, when the power grab really took off. There is supposed to be a balance of power between the 3 branches of government – Executive, Legislative and Judicial – and then between federal government and state governments, and then between the state governments and the people.

The tenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States is part of the Bill of Rights. That amendment regards the restrictions placed upon the federal government, and reads: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

 So why give much thought to this political problem? Once again, the answer: The nature of mankind, including religious mankind, is to gather power to itself. That means among the leaders in the church, and the church in relation to the Lord of the church [the church taking over the Lord’s position and function of Head.]

 That’s the message to the church of Laodicea [Rev. 3], where the Lord is shown having difficulty getting into His church. In view of our being in the time of that church age, let’s be sure we are not part of that power grab.

1. Yes, I will say that it does matter to almost all of us if our circumstances are difficult. But why do we feel and think that way? Isn’t it a blessing [with forever rewards] to suffer difficulties for and because of the Lord?

 We should not devise methods for being persecuted or suffering. Those will come by the Lord’s own design. It’s fine to have and enjoy self-interests, but it’s not fine to live by them. If we live by our self-interests, complaintiveness lurks around the corner, ready to pounce on us. It springs from self-interest that is not satisfied. See Genesis 4:7.

1. We turn to the Lord when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that He is the source of the shaking. In Hebrews 12, after dispelling the idea that the Lord only does sweet things to and for His people [also see Job 1 & 2 and John 15], in verses 25-29 He repeats that He is the One Who has done previous shakings [tower of Babel, Noah’s flood, Israel’s slavery in Egypt, Jesus’ ordeal of the cross, the sufferings of the church, etc.] and has not yet completed His shakings. Why?

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Because His people have taken to ourselves things that we should not, and have neglected those things that we should have not.

 The shaking of our foundations shows us if we have sand or rock under our ideas and devotions. His shakings reduce our gods to the One Who cannot be shaken. Thereafter, our service to Him is acceptable.

1. Michael Jordan, perhaps the greatest basketball player of all time, said: “I’ve missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. 26 times I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot … and missed. I’ve failed over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” It seems that failure is an important part of life, at least for those who persist despite their failures – Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan, King David, Peter [Luke 22:32], me, you [?].
2. If you will, believe this! The common tune, “Happy Birthday to You,” is copy written [copy wrote?] That, supposedly, is why the restaurant staff group who come to your table to sing on the occasion of your birthday do not sing that song. There is a policing organization for the song industry which is on the lookout for businesses that use their music/songs without paying appropriate royalty fees. Unbelievable!
3. For a well-written report on the state of the church [the Free Church and The Church of Scotland], go to [www.stpeters-dundee.org.uk/node/245](http://www.stpeters-dundee.org.uk/node/245). In it, D. A. Robertson opines that the “Church of Scotland seems beyond repair. “ Pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Scotland. Dead wood catches fire easily and burns brightly. Green wood is difficult to ignite and, if it will burn, it burns slowly and requires lot of ongoing effort by the Igniter.

 Thank you, B. W., for the report. The truth can hurt but will free those who love it.

1. Never run out of altitude, air speed and ideas at the same time.
2. If you have been searching for a clue to understanding of Matt 13:38-39, this may be it. The word “world” is a translation of the Greek “cosmos,” meaning “a world system or economy.” Jesus was speaking of the end of our current age – the age of grace – and the coming judgment. The passage has nothing to do directly with the church. It deals with Israel at the harvest time, alone, forsaken, in an alien world, deserted by her friends. She will survive by acts of God. He will save them from the enemy within and around them.
3. If you find yourself among the unrighteous judgmentalists from time to time, even knowing that the Lord is not finished yet with your antagonist, think of this. It is both unreasonable and unwise to pass judgment on a work of art before it is completed. Even a masterpiece looks terrible prior to its completion. Be patient, turn the other cheek, etc.

 It is unfair [and impossible] to judge God’s equity, intent, and ability before He is finished with His project.

1. I realize that this little series of thoughts may lean more toward personal preferences than to absolute truth, but it seems downright carnal when, during times of closest worship, the

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musicians get louder. In my opinion, louder is not better nor is it more worshipful. Getting louder seems to be for our soul’s benefit, may drive out distractions and it may display our excitement, but when we draw closer to the Lord in prayer or song, and our focus is on Him, we are quieted, not “enlouded.”

 In a similar grain, the playing of background music during prayer is at least distractive. It is also background noise to those of us who have a hearing deficit and may be wearing hearing aids. Also, it requires the one who is praying to pray louder, when in fact he may want to be humble, quiet and contrite, which do not go well with loudness.

 Preachers, please stop telling your audience to get excited [about Jesus, evangelism, etc.]. We are excited about whatever excites us. Turning on or working up some display of excitement is sheer fakery. We show what evangelism means to us. We show what our favorite sport team means to us, especially during a game. How much we love the Lord will show. Sometime it excites us; sometimes it smushes us. Perhaps preachers should work on getting their audiences more full of the Spirit. Then due excitement will flow.

 As you can tell, last night a preacher told us that those under 55 should get excited. He said those youngsters under 55 should get excited, step up and take the place of those older. I’m 80. I’m a long way from being through with my mantle, but if anyone wants it, and they think the Lord wants them to have it, that’s fine if in the spirit of 2 Kings 2.

1. Coffee beans are the second most widely traded commodities in the world – next to oil.
2. People are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered. Love them anyway.

 If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.

 If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.

 The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

 Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

 The best ideas can be shot down by the worst. Think best anyway.

 What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.

 People really need help but may attack you if you do help them. Help people anyway.

 Give the world your best and you’ll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world your best anyway.

1. More and more has been said lately about the need for desecularization of the church. One way to say the same by using another word is decluttering of the church. In my one-man observation and involvement, the Head of the church is doing exactly that.

 It is my nature to push quickly ahead in any process where I see the Lord working, but this morning the Lord used Joshua 3:4 to tell me that there are things about this renewal that I have not seen before. I am to hold back a bit but follow Him at a distance. That is a change of pace.

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Until next month.