THOUGHTS OF SEPTEMBER, 2011

1. Our words tell us and others more about ourselves than we may think they do. For example, self-doubt is shown by our using “if,” “but,” or “try.” 1) There is a vast gap between, “If I graduate,” and “When I graduate.” 2) “But” is reverse gear. “I want to graduate, but ..” 3) “I will try to graduate.” is vastly different from “I plan to graduate.”

Jesus said that our words reveal our character – Matt. 12. We can see that very easily on those few occasions [?] when we really blow our cover; but even during our more peaceful and righteous times we reveal ourselves during simple conversations. That’s fine, and even helpful, when we are with those who love us and whose commitment to us causes them to share their insights into and evidence of that which we have just then said.

James knew about the tongue’s abilities, too, did he not – Jam. 3:1-12?

2. Not one of us who write or read these Thoughts would ever do anything for revenge – right? But, if you ever fall into the grip of that sin, here is the best way to commit it. All you have to do is to live happily following your mistreatment. Live happily especially when around the person who did you dirt. That comes very close to turning the other cheek, or returning good for their evil. It’s not exactly the same thing as those two righteous responses, but it will do the job on your offender.

Here’ the “but.” After you have done it, after your deed has tasted like honey in your mouth, you will have a bitterness in your soul that will not go away until you repent before the Lord, and before that person. If that is the route you must go on your travels and travails en route to becoming like Jesus, it will be worth the resultant bitterness.

Help yourself to a first-hand experience of the Revelation 10:9-10. Happy detour towards sanctification!

3. Everyone comes into this world with a sin(ful) nature, inherited from Adam, even before we commit our first sin. If a newborn dies, it dies “in sin” because it was born “in sin” without having committed a sin. So, when we were adults in our natural [pre-born again] condition, neither you nor I were innocent either way – in our nature or in our performance.

God’s benchmark for determining human innocence vs. guilt [whether sin nature or sinnings] is the perfect man, Jesus Christ. There is no salvation outside of faith in Christ Jesus’ complete work of salvation [which also enables our sanctification] on the cross. Yes, more could be added to that central statement of Christian belief.

With that having been said, I’ll ask a question. What is the fate of those who have never heard of Jesus Christ? To answer that question, remember that no one is innocent, even if they are infants, or adults who have sterling character. The best of our goodness is inadequate. God requires His own type of goodness, called righteousness of faith in Christ Jesus. Since all of mankind is faced with that impossible situation, and part of His purpose is to redeem us from that dilemma, He had to have, and has made, a way for us to gain the righteous nature of Jesus Christ. Remember: All entered this world with a sin nature that separates us from God, and our sinful performances only add to our problem with God.

But in this Thought we are headed in a certain direction, which is: What of those who have never heard of Jesus Christ [not those who have heard of and rejected Him]? Here is the beginning of my answer: “God is fair according to His own definition of fairness. In this case, He judges according to the knowledge of Him that He has provided and according to their faith in Him based on that oft-limited knowledge. He does not judge them according to that which they do not know – that which He has not provided. [Don’t jump in against that too quickly. Read on.]

In Romans 1:18-21 we are told that God’s judgment is against all sinful humanity who push the truth away from themselves. He says that all humanity knows truths about Him because He has it built into their hearts/souls/minds. In addition, He says that from the beginning humanity has seen His creation and hs know that creation has a Creator other than itself. Then He says that the rejecters of that inner conviction and observational truth will have no excuse on the day of their judgment before that very God. We are given to understand that the rejecters were given enough about Him, the invisible God, but would not admit it or worship Him or even thank Him for His daily care. To make their predicament worse, they began to think up silly ideas of what He was like and what He wanted them to do. That leads to their permanent confusion and darkness. All of that is in Romans 1.

Therefore, those who have never had an opportunity to hear the good news about Jesus Christ will be judged by their response to the invisible God as shown in His creation and by their built-in capacity to sort-out truth in their environment and circumstances. Their inner logic and observational abilities provides for them a godliness and righteousness before God, even though they had not heard or believed [so had not rejected] the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God Himself would not be righteous if sinful people were not punished; but He would not be loving if He did not make a way for the ignorant righteous. He is both just and loving. See Romans 2:14-16. Yes, that leaves some things unaddressed, but I’ll stop there.

4. How much must I be changed before I am changed? Don’t spend too much time or effort on that Pogo-type navel gazing thought. [Pogo is that swamp animal cartoon character who had the habit of looking at his navel while making absurd and profound introspections.]

5. The first 5 books of the Bible are much more than an accurate history of God and His early dealings with His creation. They are seed plots. You gardeners know that seeds are planted in protected and fertile sites, closely watched over while coming to life, then transplanted [planted again/born again] out in the world so as to produce their adult fruit/flowers/beauty – where they become reflective of the Master Gardener’s nature, plan and ability.

The central person in those 5 books is Moses. It’s difficult to not nominate Adam or Abraham, but Moses gets my vote for the most pivotal person in those 5 books. Besides, he was chosen later by God to join Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and may be one of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. He also was the chosen one to lead the emerging nation, Israel, out of Egypt.

6. While we are in that story, what do we know about the Pharaoh who did not know Joseph; the one who enslaved the formally privileged Israelites? Stephen said, by the Spirit, that, “another king arose who knew not Joseph” – Acts 7:8. The Greek term used for “another” means “another of a different kind,” not simply “another of the same kind.” That pharaoh was of a different race and dynasty.

The Jewish historian Josephus Flavius [37-96?] also mentioned this Pharaoh when he wrote, “the crown being come to another family.” Was he aware of God’s clarifying word to Isaiah [52:4] that he was an Assyrian? We are, by gathering information from throughout the Bible.

A few hundred years after that Pharaoh of “another family,” a descendent of his, who became uncomfortable with the spectacular growth of his non-Egyptian Israelite constituency in Goshen, was the pharaoh who contended with Moses.

7. “How bad can I get and not go to heaven?” was a common topic when I was young. It was years later, after I had long-ceased being concerned with righteousness/unrighteousness and heaven/hell, that I learned that born again Christians do not go to hell and good deeds do not get us into heaven. It is rightly placed faith that rightly places us in the right hereafter.

Even evil King Manasseh is an encouragement, is he not? Read 2 Kings 21:1-18, then 2 Chronicles 33:1-20. Also see Psalm 106:43-44, and rejoice.

8. I confidently suppose that you have proclaimed yourself available to the Lord for anything He wants of you. That’s good; but this Thought is about our not being willing to go “to” the place of service. That means, for example, we may offer ourselves to Him for such as the gift of healing, or the healing ministry, and be unwilling to work our way through college and medical school – if that is the Lord’s way for us to serve Him with that gift. We are willing to be gifted with the gift of healing or with a medical degree [if such gift existed], but we are unwilling to “go on the road” to that place of service.

Here, at this time, we have been praying that the Lord make us examples of His love to the world, to anyone and everyone anytime and every time. Then, when we are invited to pray at the mosque with our Muslim brothers [considering that they are our brothers by virtue of their being brother monotheists and brother humans and brother Americans although not brother Eckerts or brother Christians], we perceive that we have difficulty on occasions of “going to” the place of service – a mosque.

Not to fret! The Lord who called us and who revealed our lack of love [and lack of trust in Him] and who convicts us, it is He who is changing us more into His likeness. He was not reluctant to sit with sinners and to take the resulting flack from those who had less love for the lost and had less faith in His Father and who knew less of His Father’s ways.

9. In the days when warships had cannons on wheels [because they were muzzle loaded and had to be wheeled in to be reloaded, then wheeled out to be aimed and fired] a loose cannon was a potential disaster. In a storm, if a cannon became loose it could bash a hole in the ship. Thus, the term “loose cannon” as it applies to a person who is “powerful but untied/un-united” in a ship [business, church, etc.]. It is uncommon for that term to be applied to a “nobody [having B B gun power],” but is common for it to be applied to a person with power [a cannon] but who is doing his own thing.

Humility, submission, and unity [which always cost the self/ego/soul in everyone] are voluntary ties that prevent God’s cannons from becoming loose. Yes, that’s just part of the story, but it is part of the story.

10. Jesus is still the only church builder. He is building it upon the rock of the revelation of Himself. His living stone materials are people. There is nothing wrong with that church.

Question” “Have you seen that church? Where?” Despite our being insightful, spiritual creatures we have a tendency to spiritualize away many things into worthlessness, but here [“What and where is the church?”] we have the opposite tendency, which is to naturalize “the church” into something seen, heard and felt – like did Nicodemus when Jesus told him he had to be born again. Nicodemus thought in the natural; Jesus thought in the spiritual.

11. Going to church does not make us a Christian any more than going to Whataburger makes us a hamburger.

12. Among other common ways to define “church” is: a religiously organized people gathered together around someone having a title, position, heritage and probably a certain education. But that is not God’s definition of church. However, if that group 1) focuses on Jesus and 2) builds one another up in Christ, it could truly display the church; the first being necessary to avoid chaos [a not too uncommon condition among us]; the second displaying spiritual seriousness and maturity [contra-ibid].

13. When Jesus left Bethany and went to Jerusalem He passed by a fig tree [allegorical for “Israel”] and approached it looking for fruit, but found none. He did find an outward show of life [leaves]. Most translations do not show what He really said to the tree: “There shall be no fruit on you for an age.” During that “age,” which is the church age, His fruit is being brought forth in the church, while Israel is withered. Read Matthew 21:18-20.

As Christians, we produce fruit automatically. That’s because there are two classes of fruit – Galatians 5:19-21 and 22-23. One group comes easily; the other comes with deliberation. That fruit which we have shows what kind of tree we are.

14. I’m thinking that Jesus was very real in His character and soul life, not just in whom He was, and that He really appreciated reality in others. Reality means faithfulness, truthfulness, honesty, brokenness, humility, and the like. For this Thought we will omit perfection in any of those ways as being part of our reality, because we are applying it to ourselves and we are willing to say that we are not sinlessly perfect and are unlikely to become sinlessly perfect in this life. That fig tree was dishonest, so we do not want to be classified and dealt with in the same way.

It seems that the worse thing Jesus dealt with among God’s people was hypocrisy. He is recorded as having used the word “hypocrite” 20 times. Not one other person is recorded in the New Testament as having used it. What a great picture of true humility in those brothers who wrote all of those non-gospels and did not use the word that the Master had used so frequently and with such forcefulness!

It might be that they were saying that Jesus is the only person qualified to judge others and to use the word against anyone. Perhaps we ourselves are a bit too loose in referring to others as being hypocritical, although I would wager that the genuine [my observation] humility of you U. K. brothers has already restrained you in that way. Everyone judge yourself there, as I now have.

Matthew was inspired to remember Jesus’ use of the word “hypocrite” 15 of those 20 times, but let’s not think he did that because he was writing “only” to the Jews. His quotes of Jesus using “hypocrite” can reach deeply into Gentile souls, also.

15. How many of us understand that salvation depends upon: 1) agreeing with God that I am a sinner, deserving eternal punishment, 2) believing that Jesus Christ paid my penalty by His death on the cross, and 3) being willing to surrender my life to Him as my Lord and Savior? That is a clear definition of that which many believe salvation requires, is it not?

That third point, I think, should be labeled as necessary for “sanctification,” not for salvation. At this point I am using the term “salvation” to mean our initial salvation, not our “great salvation,” which would include our initial salvation, our sanctification, and our glorification.

If we throw into this mix that the Holy Spirit through James wrote that faith without works is dead [ineffective but present], that helps me see that our initial salvation is a unilateral act/gift of God but that we play a necessary part in our sanctification. Dead faith cannot bring about works of God in and through us that require a living faith.

16. All of those gods and goddesses of the ancient world mean nothing to many, but mean much to others. For example, Europe takes its name from Europa, the ancient Mycenean goddess who was abducted by Zeus. The two, in a struggle for power, are the symbol of a new order. Europa and Zeus, he in the form of a bull, are the symbol of European union.

17. Joseph’s wife was named Asenath. She was Egyptian, a pagan, the daughter of a pagan priest, Poti-pherah, priest of On. The city of On is traditionally called Heliopolis. Joseph is a picture/foreshadow of Christ Jesus. Asenath foreshadows the spiritually redeemed, the bride of Christ. It is a wonderful thing that the daughter of a pagan priest should be given in marriage to the one who is a type of our Redeemer, because we have been rescued from our devotion to this world’s gods and idols [have we not?] by our union with Jesus.

In Genesis 41:50-52 and 46:20 we are told that Asenath bore Joseph 2 sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and that they were born during the seven years of plenty, before the 7 years of famine came. It is remarkable that the two boys, who grew up in the shadow of the temple gods and goddesses, should become two of Israel’s twelve tribes, be made part of the lineage that inherited the Promised Land and one day will receive their Promised Land grants in the millennial kingdom. We can appreciate Asenath as a type of us – called-out believers from within the world system. Once she was lost, but then she became a daughter of the Lord God.

18. Consider some of the unfulfilled prophecies of two certain nations who have historically and are currently giving grief to Israel. 1) Egypt’s coming condition is described in Ezekiel 29, where it appears that they are smitten because they supported Israel, and then withdrew their support. Israel’s southern border has been mostly secure for years due to a peace treaty signed with A. Sadat of Egypt and M. Begin of Israel. That withdrawal of support is going on right now.

2) Then consider Damascus of Syria. It has existed for 4,000 years without ever having experienced the fate described by Isaiah in 17:1. With current events proceeding as they are, it may not be long until this prophecy is fulfilled.

19. Here is another candidate for the Mark of the Beast described in the Revelation 13:16-17. It is an ultra-thin and flexible computer/mobile phone/medical monitor/game playing circuit that can be stuck to the skin like a temporary tattoo and can transmit hundreds of informational facts about its wearer. What little energy it requires is scavenged from nearby electronic devices and ambient light. Virtually any form of stray radiation can power it. It is thinner than a fine human hair, and adheres to the skin at the molecular level, requiring no adhesive to keep it in place.

When [not “if”] some wearable electronic become mandatory, privacy will be replaced with control. The choice will be the “mark” or death. Taking the mark will be the most “reasonable” choice, especially if it means the death of you and your children. Those who will refuse it will be labeled radicals, trouble makers, dangers to society, unfit to use earth’s scarce resources. It will be another example of short term gain but long term pain. Those misfit radicals will obey the Lord, in favor of short term pain for long term gain.

20. It is wisdom to consider unexpected consequences when making a change, including whether to go with the Lord. When I was at that decision point at age 33, I committed to holding back nothing from Him, electing to go entirely with the Lord. In fact, if going with Him did not cost all of me [and mine], I told Him I was not even going to start. He assured me that, with that commitment, He could handle me and mine.

Since this Thought is about unintended consequences, I’ll tell you about the French word “levee,” which means to lift. The Mississippi River is so confined by levees that the silt has no place to go but to the bottom of the river. As the river bottom rises, the levees/dikes have to be built higher and higher. The bed of the river is now so high that many towns have been flooded 10 times in the past 25 years. Engineers and planners have piled long term mistakes on top of long term mistakes, and more and more people are endangered by the ultimate collapse of the levee system.

Enough about unexpected long term consequences

21. Have you identified some of those times when you declined a blessing from the Lord; perhaps designed especially for you by God and man? Those are precious times – being blessed by declining a blessing – 2 Sam. 23:16. Or perhaps you have taken the blessing and kept/used it, as well we can, often. But there are those times when the thing that pleases us and the Lord most is for us to decline the blessing. It may be done by doing a good deed secretly, or by passing a blessing on to someone else. My Thought is that I have not done that as often as I should have. I determine to watch for those opportunities.

22. Forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could have been different. Selah!

23. If the Lord tells you that you are a spiritual cornucopia, it should be taken as a compliment. It probably means that you have an abundance of various spiritual foods and are available to Him and others.

24. Navel gazing can be beneficial, or it can be nonproductive and even counterproductive. It depends upon one’s motivation and purpose. We are told to evaluate our selves/souls, hopefully under the light of the Holy Spirit, and to even judge all things and people – righteously. The spiritual person does that – righteously. The clue that the Lord gave me so I would know when I am judging righteously is whether my judgment draws me to the person I’m judging [compassion, brokenhearted for them, offering myself, etc.] or repels me from that person [“Ugh; how could he do that!” 🡪 withdrawal].

This morning [9-5-11] I was scanning in my memory over Nancy’s and my major town-moves since the Lord marched into our souls and lives in 1963 in Alta Loma, Galveston County, Texas. Nine months later, in 1964, we moved to Houston to join in life with those whom He had given us for that purpose. That was into the neighborhood of Redeemer Episcopal Church. In association with the ministries He developed there, we moved several times within Houston.

In 1972 we moved to Bellaire, Texas, a suburb of Houston, to be a factor in the possible renewal of a certain church, while still working in the Fourth Ward Clinic in Houston. In 1975 we moved to Sulphur Springs, Texas for purposes of renewal among an interdenominational group of believers. In 1981 we moved to Athens, Texas where we lived until 2009 when we moved here to Corpus Christi, Texas. This move and each of the others were permanent moves. In each case, our moves were clear callings from the Lord, verified with those who were laying down their lives with us. The saints involved in each location had a tremendous influence upon us. None of us were perfect, but everything of and everyone in the Lord prospered.

The focus of those location-reflections was the one of 1981 to 2009. We were there in Athens, again permanent, almost 30 years before the Lord told me what He was going to do in Corpus Christi. All of those 30 years we were given over to being totally embedded in life and ministry and work and relationships and responsibilities [all of which I’ll call LIFE]. We were not chomping at the bit wanting to go elsewhere. We applied ourselves to permanency, improvement, and prosperity – ours, others, things, etc. The kingdom benefitted as we took care of our sub-kingdom.

I’m sharing this with you because of two important things. First, I/we were content where we were and with our circumstances. We were in a similar situation as when Jeremiah wrote to the Israelites in Babylon [they were enslaved, but we were free] that they should settle down where they were, pray for the prosperity of the cities where they lived, be good citizens, and get on with family life. Generally, they did. In fact, when the Lord brought them out of slavery and back to Jerusalem, less than 5% came back. The vast majority stayed in Babylon, much like many of the Israelites whom had Moses brought out of Egypt wanted to go back to Egypt after they had been freed. Anyway, we were well anchored.

Secondly, the first year we were in Athens we had received a prophecy from 3 absolutely independent sources. It was only one word: “Multitudes.” Those 3 oracles had nothing else to add. I simply remembered that word, “multitudes,” relying upon the Lord to do with His word and with His son that which He would. I did not “hold or cling to” the word, but knew it was His word, that He was the All-mighty and that I was His son. We got on with life and in His time He brought/is bringing His word to pass here in Corpus Christi.

Those are my two points in this Thought – get about that which He has now put your hands to [no matter how you got there] in your sub-kingdoms, and trust Him to develop your future. Psalm 37:5 says we should trust Him and give our future to Him, and He will do it.

25. It seems to me that there are two things responsible for our misinterpretations of our Father’s intents and actions. One is shortsightedness, the other is self-centeredness. Shortsightedness looks at the immediate effect, which is often superficial. Self-centeredness looks at how it affects “me,” which is often narrow. The result: blindness to God’s love, majesty and purpose.

So, when you don’t see the events in your life as coming to you in God’s love, or they lead you to think that He is not in total control or that something in life has no good purpose – consider that you may be shortsighted and self-centered. All other choices put us in Hebrews 4:1-3.

26. A dear brother who is a preacher says he does not preach so that others can understand what he understands [he does not try to be persuasive]; but so that others can see what he sees.

27. Here is another good definition of grace: “Grace is to be or to give a blessing freely and joyfully to someone deserving the opposite, and that at my expense, for the purpose of total and complete exoneration unto victory.

28. Last night some of us were sharing some of our earliest thoughts about the ones who are now our spouses. It was good to go over in my memory those first few days of our friendship, then our first date, and to bring those impressions out of the recesses of my memories. They were in 1950, but they were even better last night than they were 61 years ago.

The things about her that grabbed me were her gracefulness, peacefulness, warmth and genuineness. Lest you think my memory is worse than it really is, I recall that she was wearing a brown sweater and that she looked outstanding in it. But that was about her. Greater than those things was that we “bonded” even in that first date. By that I mean that we focused on one another. We were with the other. We did not talk about other people and things. Although we were double dating, our evening was about the two of us.

After a couple of dates, my first serious thought about her was that she was the kind of person I would like to spend the rest of my life with, and to be the mother of my children. Not long after that thought, it occurred to me that she was the person I wanted to be with the rest of my life, and to raise our children.

No, it’s not an immediate “we married and we lived happily ever after” story. When we married, I wanted family, covenant, unity, etc., but was not mature enough to “do” it. My weaknesses were immaturity, ignorance and sin. Nancy and the Lord held us together long enough for Him to grab my heart and mind, and change my orientation from all me to all Him.

Since He became my life, He has dealt with every area of my soul – every area but not finally in any area. Since sinless perfection will not be attained in this earth-life [that’s not an excuse], I appreciate His and Nancy’s on-going patience and diligence [and yours, thank you].

29. “The greatest miracle Almighty God can do is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world, make that unholy man holy, put him back into an unholy world, and keep him holy. -- Leonard Ravenhill

30. This Thought is not an absolute, but it is worthy of being considered.

When someone of another faith/religion invites you as a Christian to attend and perhaps speak or pray in their meeting, go as they requested – fellowship with them as an absolute, full-fledged Christian [that’s why you were invited]. Pray in the name of Jesus. Proclaim Him Lord of all. Don’t push or be a bore, but be whom you are. You have been invited because you are who and what you are – a Christian. Fulfill your guests’ request and the Holy Guest’s assignment.

On the other hand, when you go there on your own, uninvited, fit in with their process. Be a proper, uninvited but allowed guest. Listen and watch. Sit when the home-folks sit, stand when they stand, kneel when they kneel [if with Muslims, kneel with them], pray to your God when they pray to their god, and don’t try to insert or assert yourself. Be the interested and cooperative self-invited observer.

31. We have Thought together before on the matter of Christians being able to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ and being told by Him that we have no sins on our/His record book. That is being offered to each of us, and to accomplish it [showing up there with no spots on our robes] we are offered two methods – both of which are to be used. There is also a third method of being cleansed, which we will consider last.

First, when we are born again we become a new creation; all things have passed away [our sin nature which we inherited from the father of all flesh, Adam, and with it our condition of being bound/subject to Satan and his temptations]. I think we are weak on this point, which is one in which we should be strong. The Lord Jesus has given us the position and power to never have to sin again, so when we do sin it is now laid totally at our charge. We have bought 100% of the responsibility for our sinnings because we have been given everything by the Lord to prevent our having to sin.

But not to despair! Secondly, the Lord has planned for and supplied us with an escape when we who need not sin choose to sin anyway. In fact, He tells us we will always commit sins – 1 John 1:8-10. That escape is conviction, repentance and confession. Any spin or alibi leaves the spot on our white garment and it will be pointed out to us at that Judgment Seat. Jesus had made these two methods available to us at great expense to Him and at no expense to ourselves. They are free, so we will have no excuse for not using them.

The third method of being cleansed is by punishment, such as by losing some of our rewards. Remember that Christians lay up rewards where they cannot be taken away from us, where no one but ourselves can trash them. Our forever salvation is not one of those rewards; it being a gift, but the permanency of our rewards is not established until we complete our present earth life. Then, our appearance at the judgment seat of Christ, with an unnecessarily spotted garment, will be associated with “loss.” That’s paying the price for our sinnings. It’s not necessary, because we can keep and re-keep our garments clean by walking boldly into the Heavenly Washateria in our times of need.

32. A few months back we gathered our Thoughts on the topic of “black swans.” Black swans are events that have 3 characteristics:

 1) They lie outside the realm of regular expectations because nothing in the past can

 convincingly point to their possibility. When they occur, everyone may be surprised.

 2) They carry an extreme impact. They don’t have to be cosmic or international impacts; they

 may simply impact personal lives or family or jobs.

 3) In spite of their outlier status, human nature makes us concoct explanations for their

 occurrence after the fact, supposedly making them explainable and predictable. That means

 we can then assign blame for the event.

It seems that we are living in the day of black swans. Consider:

 1) The January 1, 2000 Y2K computer software scare. Although some don’t think it was a black swan, it was. Billions of dollars were spent dodging a bullet and producing new computer software to replace the legacy programs that would cause a problem. The sheer volume of need caused many technology companies to look to India, Eastern Europe and China for outsourcing their software development and customer support. It was a tremendous black swan to the American work force.

 2) In 2005, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans, whose levees were thought secure. They were built to sustain a Category Three hurricane, but were not able to protect against Katrina.

 3) The 2008-2009 global financial meltdown was not supposed to happen. Those who were receiving multi-million dollar bonuses did not have strategies that would forewarn, prevent, or resolve [to date] the problem.

 4) In 2010, the British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico flowed for 3 months, releasing about 4.9 million barrels of crude oil. It was known to be possible, so certain “fail proof” precautions had been made.

 5) On March 11, 2011, Japan was rocked by a 9.0 earthquake off its coast. The quake and resulting tsunami wiped out the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor, which was built to withstand a 7.0 earthquake.

In all of the above examples, it was said that, “No one could have expected this.” Perhaps we are in the times when we should instead say, “Anything can happen.” See: 2 Tim. 3:1; 1 Thess. 5:3-5. Non-Christians are mere human beings; even Christians [who are not mere humans] see and understand things incompletely. We are not able to change the timely movements and planned outcomes of the Lord.

Unbelief, in either camp, puts us in the place of trying to be our own god. Of course we don’t always have the insight to know we are doing that. We have illusions of understanding, especially after the fact.

Black swans are not always unexpected natural events; they may be created by man, some of whom may be warning others of the potential problem. That is part of the problem in the 5 events listed above. And don’t forget that the man-made component may be man’s sins. Aggressive ignorance is a leader among man-made causes.

What will stop the progression of black swans? Will global concerted efforts and authority do it? The man supposing to have all of the answers is on his way. As I understand Scripture, the church will not be here to expose and stop him, and the Holy Spirit will not stop him either. Again, humanity is not able to change the timely movements and planned outcomes of the Lord. The church will be taken out of the world so we will not be here to fail against Him.

33. Life is good. Getting older is great. Each day and year has surprise and potential and accomplishments. If I were not so eager to experience day-by-day and year-by-year physiology, psychology and spirituality I would be tempted [only a little] to ask the Lord to promote me on to glory as soon as possible.

34. Here is a Thought on which I desire your response.

Have you learned to live peacefully, being a sinning Christian? If we say we are without sin, we are liars, said John. So, we are sinning saints. [We are not labeled “sinners” by the Lord; that label being reserved for unbelievers.] But the question is whether we have learned to live peacefully as sinning saints. If not, we may not have learned to trust the Lord’s undiminishable love for and patience with us.

I’m not saying that we should sin freely [unless we understand what St. Francis meant when he said we should love God and sin freely], but that we should enter into a rest despite the sureness of sins in our lives. There is no rest for us until we have learned to rest in Him in all ways at all times. Then we have entered into His rest -- Hebrews 3 and 4.

The way to reign over sin [the quality or nature] is to stop trying to reign over sinning, to accept ourselves for how we are and for what the Lord has done for/in us. We need to stop acting like sinlessness is within our reach and that God’s love for us depends upon our stopping sinning.

It is helpful and encouraging to understand that even those He labels as overcomers are not sinlessly perfect.

35. It has been known for many years that the Dead Sea is not totally “dead,” because it has numerous microscopic life-forms, but no fish. And, it has been known for decades that there are fresh water springs in the Dead Sea, as ripples of water are clearly visible on its surface. Now scientists have discovered large, deep springs that are not visible from the shore or surface.

There are reports that there are hundreds of such springs, with complexes hundreds of meters long, some with craters up to 30 meters deep.

That is another in an ongoing flow of news that requires almost continual image/pattern adjustments.

36. The doctrine of Christian unity is absolutely true! So, why is it disputed and watered down and rejected “everywhere?” Jesus’ prayer in John 17 and Paul’s teaching by the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 5 are true.

If you agree with Jesus, Paul, the Holy Spirit and me, then don’t do something about it – continually do all you can about it. Such as, reject any form of division for yourself, and live the truth. Lay the axe at the root of the tree. Don’t compromise.

37. William Tiptaft [1803-1864] was a British Baptist preacher. He is credited with saying: “If rich men only knew when they died, how their relatives would scramble for their money, the worms for their bodies, and the devil for their souls, they would not be so anxious to save money.”

38. Jesus was first simply misunderstood, including by His family [mother and half-siblings] and John the Baptist; then ridiculed as being a drunkard and glutton [by the religious leaders and Bible teachers]; then violently opposed by those who gradually saw substance to Him, His ministry, and His growing group; then accepted as being the Self-Evident Truth by those who concluded such after-the-fact of His natural life here.

Psychiatrists/Psychologists and successful presenters of new truths tell us that a genuinely new idea is always rejected on its first presentation. Thus, it must be introduced gently, properly couched, and approached tangentially or it will be rejected. A bridge must be built between previously accepted truth and the new idea, or the listening mind will not be able to leap across even a small chasm.

But then there is revelation!

39. The Lord Holy Spirit and a small group of His shepherds were concerned that there be no greater burden laid on the saints at that place and time of the church than a few essential, minimum ones – Acts -- 15:28-29. I think that today’s church leaders who are sensitive to the Spirit can present to their flocks a non-burdensome list of time and place essentials, and that many do exactly that. That which one congregation finds essential may not be the same as their neighboring congregation. The 2 points here are 1) that the essential list be minimal and light, and 2) that the shepherds do exercise their responsibility to speak to issues under the authority of the Holy Spirit.

40. If you are looking for your own list on how to be circumspect, how about 3 things that the Lord offered us: 1) wash one another’s feet, 2) Carry one another’s burdens, and 3) be an encouragement to one another.

41. If you are wondering why Paul, who knew so much about the end times and heaven, did not write about the millennium, how about this: He died 20 or 30 years before John wrote The Revelation [that time gap is moderately accurately known, but not by me at this date]. The Revelation was a revelation of many end times things to John only. It verified and enlarged upon that which the Lord had shown the prophets and the New Testament writers, who knew about the rapture, the tribulation, Jesus’ second coming to reign on earth, and heaven. John knew that The Revelation was loaded with new information, so he dutifully warned his readers that they should not change a single word in it.

42. Some wisdom on the common level, as shared in our leadership meeting:

 1) “We offend one another often by talking about necessary topics.” That was on the topic of how

 hurt feelings are so common among the weaker of us, and at least a bit present among all of us.

 2) “Let those who have followed be those who lead.” That has to do with whom to invite to join

 the fellowship of leaders.

 3) “We don’t care how much others know, until we know how much they care.” Again, that had to

 do with selection of additional brothers to be among the leadership.

43. We are forgiven of our sins/sinnings when we repent and seek forgiveness. However we are not forgiven of our sin [our fallen sin nature] which gave us earthly life before we were born again by receiving a new and Holy Spirit. Instead of being forgiven of our sin nature, it is replaced with another spirit, the Holy Spirit. We then have the nature of Jesus. Our old nature is done away with and we are a new creation, not a forgiven original creation. God’s axe has been put to the root of the tree.

Choose Life !!