

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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No. 10

THE SUNSET YEARS

(NO.3)

By Robert R. Taylor Jr.

Growing older graciously in faith, hope and love was the basic thrust of the previous article. Now we turn to another trio of graces in which the sunset years should find us majoring.

YEARS OF PATIENCE - NOT IMPATIENCE

Patience, defined, is steadfastness, endurance, the ability to bear up under stress and strain and the keeping on without capitulation to spineless surrender and devilish defeatism. It is one of the seven Christian graces and must be supplied to foundational faith. Its kingly companions are virtue, knowledge, self-control, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Patience is a fruit of faith that has been tried and tested (James 1:2,3). The writer of Hebrews 10:36 affirms our need of patience in doing God's will and at last in attaining the heavenly hereafter.

Patience is far more likely to be found in the aged than in youth and middle age. Youth wants it **yesterday**. But Rome was not built in a day. A gigantic oak does not grow up in a night as does a mushroom. The great evils of our day have not developed in a day and will not be solved in a day regardless of what idealistic youth anticipates. Crops of cotton, wheat and beans are not planted today and harvested twenty-four hours later. James has some choice statements relative to patience in James 5:7,8,10,11.

Patience is not a guaranteed addition to the aged. They must have worked at it all across the years of life. Paul told aged men in Titus 2:2 to be patient. It is heartwarming and deeply inspirational to see a veteran saint who has grown more and more patient and is more and more like Job of old in the eloquent

exhibition of this rare and yet very valiant virtue. It is worth so much in advancing years to be patient and accept each day as it comes.

YEARS OF GRATITUDE - NOT INGRATITUDE

“Thanks;” “I am grateful;” and “I appreciate your doing that for me” are heard less and less in our day. Sadly and yet truthfully, they are vanishing expressions from our daily forms of vocal communication. Far too many people act as though such expressions are archaic, obsolete and totally outdated.

Gratitude should ever grace the soul. Youth should be taught it; mature people should practice it; aged people should not forget it. A wise elder in a northern congregation where I have conducted a number of gospel meetings once said, “**Thanks** and **Please** are two of the most powerful words in our language.” I wholeheartedly concur.

Gratitude should grace the portals of our homes. It should grace every relationship in the congregation where we have membership. It should grace our communications with Christians scattered throughout the brotherhood. It should grace business and neighborly contacts. Gratitude builds bridges; it fosters friendships. Its opposite, ingratitude, burns bridges; it flaunts friendships.

Jesus lived in the atmosphere of appreciation. He knew how to say thanks. His very spirit was, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25). Gratitude graced His words spoken outside Lazarus' tomb just prior to the performance of one of His greatest of miracles, the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:41). Paul has much to say relative to gratitude in such passages as Ephesians 5:20; Philipians 4:6; Colossians 4:2; 1

Thessalonians 5:18 and 1 Timothy 2:1,2.

Gratitude should be vertical reaching **up** to God. It should be horizontal reaching **out** to man. Gratitude is gold in attaining and maintaining marvelous human relationships for the young, the middle age and those in their sunset years.

YEARS OF WISDOM - NOT FOLLY

Enthusiasm, energy, idealism and aspirational dreams are associated with youth. Wisdom comes with age. James 1:5 declares it to be a gift from God and comes in answer to prayer. True wisdom is much more apt to grace the hoary head than the young head. People of true wisdom have usually lived for quite some years, have profited from life's lessons, have drunk deeply and passionately from the flowing fountain of knowledge and have spent much time communing with the Father in prayerful petitions for wisdom. Knowledge is acquaintance with facts, it is the accumulation of information. Wisdom is the acute ability to use well and wisely what we know.

Thousands of years ago the book of Job declared, “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding” (Job 12:12). The sunset years should experience a deepening degree of workable wisdom. The years of folly or foolishness should have been left back in a youthful past. Facing the sunset is not time for folly to be the throne in a person's heart and life.

THE SUNSET YEARS (NO.4)

The **advancing** years of one's earthly pilgrimage should surely observe an **advancing** of every veteran Christian in faith, hope, love, patience, gratitude and wisdom. These valiant virtues have been covered to date. To that list we now add more golden years of valiant virtues and wonderful works for the sunset years.

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**YEARS OF SERVICE -
NOT OF RETIREMENT**

I am not speaking of retirement from a job or one's profession by which he has earned his living and more than earned his pension or retirement check monthly. I am speaking about continued service as a Christian, to one's mate if still living, to one's children, grandchildren and to one's neighbors and friends. Freed from the gruelling years of punching a time clock or being on the job or at the office some fifty weeks per year, one has more time to devote to the Lord and His Cause.

Service to Christ, health permitting of course, should continue in the home, in the congregation, in the community and in the world at large. The home can be a haven of good things as children and grandchildren come back for visits. Hospitality can be extended to Christian friends and those in need. The fatherless and widows can find repose here. The lonely and distressed can be shown that there are still those who care. Those overburdened with sorrow and sighing can find an open ear and a sympathetic heart into which to pour overwhelming problems. Great lessons of truth can be taught by veteran Christian hus-

bands and fathers and Christian wives and mothers. The home can render some of its greatest service in the sunset years.

Those who are older and more skilled in the meat of the gospel can and should teach the younger and less skilled to know God's Word, respect His will and cling tenaciously to sound doctrine. **Faithful Christians who are growing old gracefully can do much to insure a safe transfer of truth from the departing generation to the oncoming generation.** Paul had this very courageous concept in mind in 2 Timothy 2:2. In Titus 2:2,3, Paul addressed words of wisdom to older men and older women. Older men and women who have succeeded as husbands and fathers, as wives and mothers, as elders, deacons, preachers, teachers, personal workers, church builders and in their honorable professions of secular work have much wisdom and insight to pass on to younger people. They should be willing to pass it on. Young people should be eager to give it a hearty reception.

In **The Spiritual Sword**, April, 1984, which deals with "Great Families," Brother Rex A. Turner, Sr. has a beautiful and well-written article on "What The Bible Teaches About Being A Good Grandparent." In his conclusion he states, "There is a very important role to be played by grandparents. They need their grandchildren and their grandchildren need them. God pity the grandparents who feel that there is no longer a place or a need for them in the home and in the church. Many can do their best work in their silver and declining years" (p. 23). (*See Editor's Note below.)

In a meeting I conducted for a congregation in Missouri there is a man still serving as an elder who is ninety-six years of age. His mind is still sharp and he attended both day and night services of the meeting. He has served as an elder for sixty years. In that same congregation is a silver haired saint who has missed only one or two Lord's Day services since 1917. He and his good companion never missed a service of the meeting. As their years were advancing, they bought a home

right across the street from the church building so they could be close to all congregational services and activities. They are both still serving and the beauty of it is that they are respected by young and old alike. They love every minute of it. Nobody could convince them that they are too old to serve God and man. That is how they want death to find them - still serving.

YEARS OF JOY - NOT SORROW

Sorrows do come but they cannot dispell true Christian joy that has been instilled over a lifetime of fruitful faithfulness to the Lord. Paul wrote Philemon and Philippians during his first Roman imprisonment. They had to be written fairly close together for the duration of this imprisonment was only two years. He referred to himself as "Paul the aged" in Philemon 9. In that very epistle he spoke of his "great joy" in verse 7 and the joy he anticipated from Philemon in verse 20. In the Philippian epistle he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." He rejoiced in his aged years and while a prisoner, not knowing exactly what Nero would do with him. Jesus, on the eve of Calvary, spoke of joy, peace and hearts freed of trouble in John 15:11; 14:1-3 and 14:27.

These two examples show that advancing years and outward circumstances do not preclude holy hearts from real rejoicing. Joy and age can be linked. Many veteran saints have done it in their sunset years. **(To be continued.)**

[Editor's Note: This is a marvelous observation and one of which I have tried to be acutely aware, having seven precious grandchildren myself. Read Deuteronomy 4:1-10 and 6:1-9 and note particularly 4:9 and 6:2, where God commands grandparents to accept an active role in the spiritual training of their grandchildren. The wisdom of years of spiritual study and living specially equips grandparents for such roles. Please do not neglect this great responsibility.]

THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

By Erwin Cowen

"And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel and Midianite,

Moses' father-in-law. We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: **come thou with us, and we will do thee good:** for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." (Numbers 10:29). Man's sojourn upon earth is often referred to as the journey of life, and so it is a good journey if that man has obeyed the Gospel and shares in the promises of God. "For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Knowing that there is no life in sin, but that life is in Jesus only, one cannot correctly make the journey before accepting Christ as Lord. Therefore the good journey begins at baptism. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above not on things of earth" (Colossians 3:1,2). "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ let us go on toward perfection not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward" (Hebrews 6:1).

The journey of life is one of progress toward perfection. Our guide is the Bible, wherein is contained the directions for our journey. "O, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments" (Psalms 119:5,6). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Psalms 119:105). "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

Our earthly journey ends at death, yet it takes us unto a land of rest. "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:11).

This "rest" is found in the city of God. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great high mountain and shewed me that great city and the holy Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God" (Revelation 21:10).

"Let him that heareth say come" (Revelation 22:17). We have heard and accepted the word of God

which causes us to think of others who should be our companions in travel toward perfection and eternal rest. We invite others to go with us and share the joys of the Christian race and the hope of eternal life. May we be of the same mind as Paul when he said, "Brethren my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). There is always room for more. "All the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

260 Walker

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Editor's Note: Brother Erwin Cowen served as co-editor of the **Fulton County Gospel News** from 1972 through the middle of 1981. Only brother Clovis Ragsdale served in this capacity for a longer period. Brother Cowen and his wife are both in frail health, but both are as faithful as can be and still serve as great examples to our youth of what it means to serve God in our Sunset Years. Send a note of thanks and get well to Erwin and Joyce Cowen at the address above. **FCGN** is what it is today in large measure thanks to brother Cowen's faithful service.]

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS NOT A DENOMINATION

by Kevin V. Rutherford

When Jesus Christ promised to build His church He spoke of building only one (Matthew 16:18, 19). The apostle Paul referred to the church as "the body of Christ" (Ephesians 1:22, 23). He said there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4). Furthermore, He said Jesus Christ is the Saviour of that body (Ephesians 5:23). This body, or church, is the same one which was established by Jesus Christ through the preaching of the apostles on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is the one and only church which the Lord established, and the only one purchased with His saving blood (Acts 20:28). Only those who are members of this one body are Christians (Acts 11:26).

Neither Jesus, nor His apostles, nor any other faithful Christian in

the first century established any denominations. Denominations have been established by those who teach for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9). These are they who pervert the Gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:8, 9) by adding to, or taking away from the Word of God (Revelation 22:18, 19). Changing the Word of God produces man made churches (denominations) and never produces the Lord's church. The Lord's church is produced only when the pure seed of the Word of God is sown without corruption (Luke 8:11).

We can know that the church of Christ is the one and only church which Jesus Christ built. We know that because the church of Christ uses the Bible as its only guide and authority (2 Timothy 3:15-17). A congregation of the Lord's church exists whenever a group of people take the Bible as its only guide in religious matters and make proper application of the pattern set forth for the church in the New Testament. Those who are faithful members of the church of Christ have done this very thing. The church of Christ which Jesus founded on the day of Pentecost exists today because we have followed His guide and blueprint for the church.

Denominationalism is sinful because it is divisive (1 Corinthians 1:10). It is sinful because it makes worship vain (Matthew 15:9). Denominationalism is sinful because there is no authority or justification for it in God's Holy Word.

The church of Christ (Romans 16:16) is not a denomination! For this reason we must be careful not to refer to the church or its members in denominational terms. To say that members of the body of Christ are "church of Christ's" is to use a term for the people of God not authorized in the New Testament. Further, such a term suggests that members of the church of Christ are simply members of another denomination. For the same reason we should not refer to "church of Christ doctrine," nor should we speak of a single individual Christian as a "church of Christ" in the same way we might refer to a Baptist, a Catholic,

or a Methodist. We must never give the impression to anyone through the terms we use that we believe the church of Christ is nothing more than another of the thousands of man made denominations.

The church of Christ is the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the Lord's church. The church of Christ is not a denomination!

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SALVATION BY GRACE

by Jerry W. Joseph

It is God's desire that all men be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). God, as it is stated in 2 Peter 3:9, ". . . is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." It is evident therefore that God does not want anyone to be lost.

God, by His grace, has provided the way by which we can be saved. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Paul declared, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). In Ephesians 2:8, these words, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." It is impossible for anyone to be saved apart from the grace of God.

Because the Bible declares that we are saved by the grace of God, does that mean that our salvation is wholly by God's grace apart from any acts of obedience upon man's part? **NO!** Nowhere within the Word of God is it taught that salvation is by grace alone. The idea that we are saved "wholly by grace" is the Calvinistic idea of God's grace and stands in conflict with what the Bible teaches concerning the grace of God.

If salvation is by grace alone, then that must mean that man has no part whatsoever in his own salvation. But, salvation by grace does not exclude man having a part in his salvation. Peter in Acts 2:40 exhorts the people "save yourselves."

We must remember that salvation by grace does not exclude the necessity of obedience upon man's part. When we obey the commands

of God in becoming a Christian, that does not nullify God's grace. Jesus emphasized the necessity of obedience in Matthew 7:21, when He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." We cannot be saved without obedience to God's Word. According to Acts 10:35, only those who ". . . feareth him, and worketh righteousness, [are] accepted with him." In Hebrews 5:9 we learn that Jesus is ". . . the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." To obtain salvation offered by God's grace means that we must believe (John 8:24); repent (Luke 13:3); confess Christ (Matthew 10:32-33) and be baptized (Mark 16:16).

Yes, salvation is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). But just because salvation is a gift does not mean there are no conditions that must be met by man. Neither does it mean that it ceases to be a gift when we obey the conditions stated. We do not merit salvation but we must accept God's grace according to his conditions and not reject it (Acts 13:46).

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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