

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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THE SUNSET YEARS

(NO.5)

By Robert R. Taylor Jr.

The Bible tells people how to live in youth, in middle age and during the sunset years. Truly, it is the Book for all the seasons of a man's pilgrimage on earth. Several aspects have been set forth in the quartet of articles already penned in this study. The two qualities planned for this article are of spiritual kinship. They are interrelated; they compliment each other.

YEARS OF SWEETNESS - NOT SOURNESS

Sweet reasonableness is far better in the sunset years than soured rebellion against God and man. The reason why some are soured on the world in their sunset years is because they were soured on the world during youth and early adulthood. The years of majoring in such have just added deeper degrees of the soured-on-the-world disposition. Sweetness of soul and reasonableness of disposition should begin in youth, be cultivated in the active adult years and be retained in the sunset years.

Sourness is never associated with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph in their sunset years. As per the Bible record, they became sweeter of soul and more saintly in disposition. Moses and Aaron, who both lived well over a full century, became sweeter of soul and more serene of spirit in their last days. Samuel did not allow serious reverses in his sunset years to sour his soul and make cantankerous his character. David grew in sweetness of soul as the end of his seventy year pilgrimage on earth drew nigh. Every indication is that Solomon his son did not. Sweetness of soul characterized the tried and patient patriarch, Job, in his sunset years. Zacharias, Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna in Luke 1 and 2 all grew in sweetness of soul during their sunset days.

In marked contrast, there is what both sacred and secular history testify relative to the aging despot Herod the Great. He was hateful, arrogant, spiteful, murderous and very soured on the world as the end neared. These were his cruel characteristics in earlier life as well as in later life. He was malicious and a misfit of a man. The end of certain of his descendants was little better. He had established a tone and tenor that many of them swallowed with a gullible-like slavery.

Those sweet in their sunset years are a joy and inspiration to themselves, to others around them and a credit to the influence of God's word has had in their lives. Those soured on the world are no joy to themselves, to others who **have** to be associated with them and certainly are no honor to the Cause of Jehovah which they have failed to honor and glorify.

GROWING OLD IN CONTENTMENT NOT IN DISCONTENTMENT

Holy Writ depicts contentment as a virtue of excellence. The unnamed Shunammite woman of Elisha's era was an admirable person of contentment. Godliness and contentment are connected by Paul and declared by Inspiration to be of "great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. An having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Paul possessed miraculous gifts many as we learn from First Corinthians 12-14. However, the marvelous disposition of contentment was not conferred upon him miraculously. He wrote in Philippians 4:11-12, "Not that I speak in respect of want; for **I have learned** in whatsoever state I am, therewith **to be content**. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Paul mastered this delightful disposition and very, very rare trait of

character by persistence and diligence of daily work.

Contentment is an imperative for growing old gracefully. Aged people who have majored all their lives in devilish discontent make themselves and all their associates miserable. Those who have grown in the golden virtue of contentment will realize happier days as their sun sets and the grave beckons. This is especially invaluable in the sunset years of marriage. Years of living together should have mellowed their spirits and sobered their thinking. The greedy love for things in youth should now be curbed and going home to heaven should be of top priority. By the time the sunset years are reached, folly should have given way to a calm acceptance of things as they come day by day. Wild and reckless passions that called for illicit fulfillment should have been permanently curbed by an extra large dose of self-mastery over thoughts, words and deeds.

The precious possession of real contentment is one of the real ways to grow old gracefully.

THE SUNSET YEARS

(NO.6)

Several fundamental facets have been considered in previous installments. Two final ones will be considered in this final article of the series.

GROWING OLD IN HELPFULNESS

Marvelous marriage cannot survive in a selfish spirit of arrogant independence. Marriage should be entered with a viewpoint of helping the marital partner and being aided in return by one's mate. As the years come and go there should be a beautiful buildup of this spirit of holy helpfulness. Each should major in the great and lasting work of gentle helpfulness. Happy marriages are begun when each becomes a ready, willing helper to the other's needs and joys. Each partner should be sustained with an increased dependence upon each other. The

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sunset years of marriage can find them happy and contented in helping each other. Now it may take both of them to keep the house clean and tidy when once the wife was able to do this alone. It may take both of them to maintain the lawn and flower beds when once the husband did it alone. It may require both of them to move a piece of furniture. During retirement years they may enjoy getting the meals together. With no pressured haste to "hurry, hurry," they may enjoy a daily walk together early in the morning or in late afternoon or call on the sick and afflicted. The daily going of separate ways is now a thing of the past. If they both have grown old in valiant virtues of the Lord, some of their happiest days can now be theirs. These can be days of serenity and calmness, days of peace and quietness. They can be days when together they accomplish a desirable work. By growing old gracefully, he is not in her way but is her valued helper and companion. She is not "in his

hair" but a treasured companion. With the deepening furrows in their cheeks, the added bent of their weakening frames and the settling of many winters upon their silvery heads, they lovingly complement each other in the accomplishment of daily tasks. Growing old in gentle helpfulness is also an essential of graceful aging.

GROWING OLD IN THE LORD

Holy Writ frequently speaks of stalwart saints who died in a good old age. Of Abraham, Isaac and David the Good Book says, "Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people . . . And Isaac gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days: and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him . . . And he [David] died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 1 Chronicles 28:28). This trio died in good old age and in fullness of days they had lived for the Lord. They were imperfect at times and yet towered far above their average peers. When they died they left "a vast lonesome place across the sky" as Markham many centuries later would write in tribute of Abraham Lincoln. From youth to death they loved and served Heaven's God. They died in a good old age because they had grown old in Heaven's Cause on earth. People who wish to die in the Lord must be willing to live in the Lord and grow old in His service. Required here is a lifetime of service rendered. Couples who grow old in the Lord are the very ones who grow old gracefully.

Anna is mentioned only in Luke 2:36-38. She had served God loyally for many years. She bore wonderful witness relative to the Redeemer and the redemption He would bring. She made a brief appearance in Holy Writ and then faded from the scene. Yet she left a precious portrait of one loyal to God in old age and one who was exceedingly grateful for the coming

of the Messianic child. He was her joy by day and peace by night.

The parents-to-be of John are quite old when we first meet them in Luke 1. Together, as a team of truth, they have grown old in the Lord. Luke 1:6 states, "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." They were well along in years at the birth of the Messianic Harbinger. We have no way of determining how long they lived subsequent to John's birth. However, their final mention has their growing old in the Lord. We cannot help but believe that the unrecorded part of their final days found them pursuing the same type of lifestyle - godly living. They grew old; they grew old together; they grew old together in the Lord; they grew old gracefully and gratefully. How fortunate when God-fearing couples can grow old in the Lord. Such gives marvelous meaning and direction to their last days.

CONCLUSION

Many of the comments in this series have been lifted from my book, "**Christ In The Home**," which was first published in 1973, has gone through many printings and is still a good seller.

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[Editor's Note: Again we thank brother Taylor for allowing us to run these articles in **FCGN**. These excellent remarks should cause those of us who are older to reflect upon our sunset years and our advancing steps to meet the Lord. Those who are younger should likewise give diligence to prepare their characters for the coming of the sunset years, that they might enjoy that time and not be bitter against the years.

I heartily recommend brother Taylor's book, **Christ In The Home**. Why not write to him and order a copy? I promise you that it will lead you through a Bible study of what the home should be. Everyone who reads and heeds its admonitions will have a better home for it. There are 18 chapters

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covering "Christ in the home; Christ in today's homes; needs of today's homes; marriage in the home; Bible portraits of husbands, wives, fathers and mothers in the home; the child in the home; remembering God in youth; the in-law in the home; what have they seen in thine house?; growing old gracefully in the home; and the heavenly home." This would make an excellent gift for your children or grandchildren if they have their own families or are ready to begin a family.

If nothing else, please drop brother Taylor a note and tell him if his articles on **The Sunset Years** have been helpful to you. I know he will appreciate hearing from you, even if he cannot respond to all who thank him for sharing his writing talents with the brotherhood for so many years.]

KEEP ON PRAYING

1 THESS. 5:17

By Joel Wheeler

One of the greatest blessings a Christian possesses is the avenue of prayer. Prayer is access to the ear of God. Peter wrote, "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12). The world does not have the same consideration from God as does the Christian (John 9:31). The Bible clearly states that God listens to the prayers of his children (Mat. 7:9-11; Gal. 3:26-29). Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thes. 5:17). The Christian must keep on praying because of its benefits.

Keep on praying for elders. The inspired writer said, "Remember them which have the rule over you" . . . (Heb. 13:7a). The elders have a tremendous responsibility placed upon them. They watch over the church and the souls of men are at stake (Heb. 13:17). They also lead by example (1 Pet. 5:3). Many times "hell-bound" church-goers murmur and complain to the point of causing much grief among the elders. They are dissatisfied with everything and never pleased with anything. These men often go for years without any acknowledg-

ment of appreciation or encouragement. The church has an obligation to pray for the eldership.

Keep on praying for preachers. The duty of the preacher is to preach. He is to preach the work of God when it is convenient and when it is not convenient. There are many difficult situations which must be handled with extreme care. His obligation according to the scriptures is to reprove or expose, rebuke or admonish, and exhort or comfort. The word of God is the sword which divides right and wrong (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12) and it must be done with patience (2 Tim. 4:1-2). Many preachers err from the truth and even leave the church because of personal attacks on them and their family. Some preachers have compromised the truth for money. We need to pray that they will stand for truth regardless of the consequences.

Keep on praying for the church. The church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-33) and is under a great attack from Satan. Satan is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). The world looks at the church as a bunch of ignorant, superstitious radicals. The world's philosophy is influencing the church in many areas of the country. Many individuals in the church are apathetic towards homosexuality, fornication, divorce and remarriage (for any cause), social drinking, dancing, gambling (including the lottery) and yes, even lying. We need to pray that the church will stand strong for honesty, integrity and Biblical morality. We need to keep on praying that the church will preach the gospel in every corner of the world and not turn into a social club.

Without prayer our battle against Satan would be lost. God gives us strength, courage and hope through the power of prayer. As a father listens to his children's requests, so does our heavenly Father hear ours. We may face tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril and even the sword (Rom 8:35), but we still have access to God through prayer.

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GIVING

BIBLE LESSON NUMBER NINE

by Richard England, Sr.

Giving of one's material possessions has always been an important part of the life of God's people. It also has been the test of faith and sincerity which many have failed to pass. In **Matthew 19:16-22**, an apparently dedicated and morally good man, who had accumulated much of the world's goods, was instructed of the Lord to sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Jesus. "*But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*" Sadly, such is the case of many people. Although willing to abide by many of the commandments, live a good moral life, and be an honour to their parents in many ways, some will not part with their money, even for Christ. James says "rust" of the silver and gold will be a witness against those who have obtained it by dishonesty and kept it for their own personal pleasure (**James 5:1-6**). Jesus says that those who trust in uncertain riches cannot enter into the Kingdom (**Mark 10:13-25**). By inspiration, Paul wrote: "*But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things: and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness*" (**1 Timothy 6:9-11**). Notice here, it is those "that will be rich," not necessarily those that are; it is those whose priority, whose main goal in life is to gather the wealth of the world. He is speaking of people who "love" money above things that are truly of great importance in life. One may be guilty of this sin even though he is a pauper.

When one is willing to give of his material possessions to others, to whom shall he give? Give to one who is in need (**Ephesians 4:28**). Give to those who ask for assistance (**Luke 6:30**). Give to those who teach the gospel

(Galatians 6:6). Give to the treasury of the church for work that is common to others of the Lord's people (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). Give to as many as we have opportunity to help (Galatians 6:10). In fulfilling these obligations, it can be said that we are giving to the Lord Himself (Matthew 25:40). Do not give to those who are lazy and unwilling to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

For the man who is willing to give and comes into contact with an opportunity, the next question is: how much should he give? Contrary to the opinion of many religious leaders today, the Bible does not teach us that we are to give a tenth of our income and beyond that we have no obligation. We are not under the Law of Moses which commanded a "tithe." In fact, under that Law, they gave a tenth and, in addition to that, a "freewill offering" (Leviticus 22). We live under the New Testament, the Will of Christ (Hebrews 9:15-17). Our giving is governed by the law under which we live. The New Testament teaches that we are to be "ready" and "willing" to fill a need when it arises (1 Timothy 6:17-19). Paul wrote: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:6-7). The more we prosper, the more we should give (1 Corinthians 16:2). Liberality is measured by willingness and self sacrifice and not in dollars and cents (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). This is why it could be said of the widow who gave only two mites that she gave more than all the rich people (Mark 12:41, 44).

From the teaching of these few texts and many others in the New Testament, it can be seen that we are to give what is needed: money, food, clothing, even ourselves. Our giving is an indicator of our dedication to God and his people. Remember, the greatest giver of all is God himself (James 1:5, 17; John 3:16).

God does not dramatically strike people dead before the church today for lying about their gifts as

he did one time in Jerusalem (Acts 5), but many will be eternally lost for failing to give as they should. No man on the face of the earth knows another's personal circumstances and attitude of heart like God does. God, not our fellow man, is our Judge. He knows our hearts.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38).

Questions

1. What are we to give?
2. How much are we to give?
3. To whom are we to give?
4. What is to be our attitude toward giving?
5. What are the rewards of giving?
6. Who is the greatest giver of all times?
7. Will those that fail to give as they should be lost eternally?

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[Richard England served as co-editor of Fulton County Gospel News from 1962-1968. These Bible lessons may be purchased from him at the address above. This is a 13 lesson booklet suitable for high school and adult study.]

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-23).

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