

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Serving In My Senior Years

By Robert Harkrider

I well remember how disappointed I was when, as a young preacher, I was told that one of our elders was “retiring” as an elder. I thought, “How could any Christian of any age ever retire?” Aren’t we responsible to do like Paul who wrote, *“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 3:14)?

Although now many years later I continue to believe his attitude was wrong, I have begun to understand perhaps why that elder felt the need to quit. Growing old does mean many physical and mental changes, and in addition, unwise youth may tend to ignore the value of senior citizens. I admit that I cannot do things that were easily accomplished a few years ago. My pace is slower as also my recall, and all the characteristics described by the writer of Ecclesiastes are becoming a reality: *“those who look through the windows grow dim, and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and the mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly”* (Eccl. 12:3-4).

Do these changes in life mean that a senior Christian should quit serving? Is it time to “retire”? Has his work in the Lord’s kingdom become of no value? Certainly not! In fact, there are many attributes that are embellished by a life filled with righteousness. Sure, changes in life will make alterations in the type of service one can do, but both men and women of age provide valuable service. Consider a few ways in which age is a benefit.

Example. A man who serves as an elder of a congregation must be spiritually mature, i.e. *“not a novice”* (1 Tim. 3:6). Furthermore, he is to be an example to the flock (1 Pet. 5:2-3). While it is true that he already meets these qualifications at the time of his appointment, is it not reasonable that years of experience increase his ability to advise, exhort, or rebuke troubled souls and lead new converts? His example of godliness should inspire all who know him. What a blessing he is to the congregation. *“The silver-haired is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness”* (Prov. 16:31).


Counsel. Older women, as well as older men, can give wise counsel to couples involved in troubled marriages (Titus 2:2-4). Our modern society accepts divorce as though expected, and many are surprised when they meet a couple that has celebrated a golden anniversary. It is so rewarding to be able to offer guidance to younger couples. If you have a spiritual problem, would you not rather seek the counsel of someone whose life reflects the character you want to emulate?

Wisdom. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”* (Prov. 9:10). This proverb is the capstone of the book of Proverbs. It is true that even the young who fear the Lord are able to make wise choices, but individuals who have life’s experiences of good times and tough times are able to share an insight that comes only with age. Many times old age leaves us in debilitated bodies, but the inward spirit is filled with the wisdom of God’s word. There is no reason for this person to “retire.”

Patience. Young people tend to be impatient. As a young preacher I used to hope that each sermon or Bible class would result in immediate response. I would tend to be disappointed when my good brethren did not move as quickly as I thought they should. But I soon learned that, like any farmer who sows seed, it takes time for the plant to grow. Give it water and nurture it, but wait patiently. As the saying goes, “Rome was not built in a day.” Patience is a virtue of senior citizens.

Knowledge of God’s Word. You have probably seen a new Christian who was so excited about obeying the gospel that he/she wanted to know everything in the Bible all at once! Of course, that individual soon learned how deep the Scriptures are in revealing the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:6-16). By contrast, consider the blessing of a person

who over many years has continually added the knowledge of God's word by daily reading, meditating, and memorizing. The senior Christian is a wellspring of faith who can share God's word with others.

Are there any who feel that the aged Christian has reached a time to quit? Has the younger generation passed him/her by? He may not be able to do what he used to do, but years of faithful service to God have molded him into a unique blessing to all who seek to follow his example, learn from his counsel, be guided by his wisdom, yield to his patience, and be filled with his knowledge of God's Word. *"You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God, I am your God"* (Lev. 19:32). *"But fools despise wisdom and understanding"* (Prov. 1:7). — [Truth Magazine, November 2016](#). 


Why "Liberal" and "Conservative" Churches of Christ?

By Robert Harkrider

During the past three decades many have asked this question. Some sincere brethren who have been caught up in one stream or another never fully understood, and many who were too young before have now grown to adulthood wondering why. It is therefore a good question worthy of repeated investigation. Labels of "liberal" and "institutional" versus "anti" and "conservative" have been used by some as a prejudicial tool to halt further investigation. Labels used as prejudicial clubs are to be condemned; yet the terms "liberal" and "conservative" are proper when used as adjectives to describe a difference in attitude toward Bible authority, and consequently, a difference in practices. As the years go by, the attitude underlying the division becomes more apparent. We are not separated because one group believes in benevolence and the other does not, nor because of jealousy and envy. We have divided over a basic attitude toward the Bible. A liberal attitude justifies any activity that seems to be a "good work" under the concept, "We do a lot of things for which we have no Bible authority." A conservative attitude makes a plea to have Bible authority (either generic or specific) for all we do - therefore refraining from involving the church in activities alien to that of the church in the New Testament.

Briefly, the walls of innovations which have divided us are built in three areas: **WHO?** Who is to do the work of the church? The church? Or a human institution? The church has a God-given work to do, and the Lord made the church sufficient to do its own work. Within the framework of elders and deacons, a local church is the only organization necessary to fulfill its mission of evangelism, edification, and benevolence (Eph. 3:10-11; 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 3:15). However, a wedge was driven when some began to reason that the church may build and maintain a separate institution - a different **WHO** to do the work of the church. This separate institution is human in origin and control. It is not a church nor governed by the church - yet it receives financial maintenance from the church. Human institutions so arranged (such as benevolent homes, hospitals, colleges or missionary societies) may be doing a good work. But when they become leeches on the church, they deny its independence and all-sufficiency and make a "fund-raising house" of God's church.

HOW? How is the work of the church to be overseen? On a local basis with separate, autonomous congregations? Or may several local churches work as a unit through a sponsoring eldership? The organization of the New Testament church was local in nature, with elders limited to oversight of the work of the flock among them (Acts 14:23; 1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28). We are divided by those who promote "brotherhood works" through a plan of inter-congregational effort with centralized oversight - an unscriptural **HOW**.

WHAT? What is the mission of the church? Spiritual, or also social? It is in this area that the loose attitude toward the Scriptures is becoming more apparent. Though wholesome activities are needed for all, the Lord died for a higher and holier mission than food, fun, and frolic. Let the church be free to spend its energy and resources in spiritual purposes (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 14:17) and let the home be busy in providing social needs (1 Cor. 11:22, 34). —From *The Reflector*, May 2015, p. 3. 

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250