

Retired Members' Corner



THE WAY IS GROWING BRIGHTER

Well folks, I've made it. I've hit the jackpot. I've received an addition to my pension (OAP) reserved for Ancient Geriatric Entities – the AGE addition. An extra 25p a week – or five shillings in my language, a couple of half crowns.

How do you manage to reach this noble age? As the Queen once remarked, all you have to do is live a long time. How were we regarded as of yore? The Jews divided old age into three stages. From 60 to 70 was regarded as “the commencement of old age.” From 70 to 80 was called “hoary headed age”. From 80 onwards was called “advanced age” and those reaching it were described as “well stricken in years”.

Now that I am well stricken in years, I have a problem. How will I spend my new found wealth? The Chancellor giveth but he also taketh away. 5.5p goes in Income Tax before I even see it. Together with the Lord's portion, my tithe, my 25p is reduced to a net 17p. Clearly much thought must go into the disposal of this princely sum – in fact I've racked my brains to determine what can be bought for 17p. I could save it up for three weeks and go to the 50p shop in Antrim using my free travel in the bus. In hot weather such an expedition would require a cool drink along the way and I would only have 1p to purchase it. Maybe I'll just save the 17p for when I grow old.

We must not despise the day of small things. The Chancellor could just as easily have said that these ancients eat less, have fewer clothing requirements, have free travel and TV licences, - we will reduce their pension by 25p a week. So let us give thanks always for all things. Those of us who are well stricken in years know that there is some purpose in our remaining as strangers and pilgrims in a place which is not our home. While we are here we will occupy till He comes, or calls. We will use the talents he has given us so that we shall not be ashamed when we appear before the bema. (2 Cor. 5 v 10).

When I go to Africa some of the Africans call me Zacchaeus because I used to be a tax collector, although I have difficulty recalling that I ever climbed a sycamore tree. Others call me Caleb because they regard me as an old man still active in his old age. You may recollect that at 85 Caleb said he was still as strong as he was at 40 when Moses sent him

out as a spy (Joshua 14 v 11). After two or three hours dancing in a Kikuyu church service I must say I am ready to sit down for a while. On the other hand I did climb the Cave Hill with William (the African pastor at the barbecue 2 years ago) and pointed out to him the various landmarks of Belfast and its environs. It occurs to me that some readers may be confronted with two ages – the age of the body and the age of the mind. You may be a young lady living in an old house. The thatch is getting thin, the windows not too clear, the walls a bit creaky and the foundation hardly supporting the frame. Well, one day you are going to get a rebuild, a new body incorruptible, immortal and we shall be like Him. In the meantime you can keep your mind young. Cultivate a cheerful spirit. I remember a popular song when I was young:

Chorus

You've got to accentuate the positive,
Eliminate the negative,
Latch on to the affirmative,
Don't mess with mister in between.

Verse

To illustrate my last remark,
Jonah in the whale,
Noah in the Ark,
What did they do?
Just when everything looked so dark,
They said – (repeat Chorus)

Well, of course, Jonah and Noah trusted in the Lord. The Bible tells you how to keep your mind right – whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things (Phil 4 v 8).

Don't look on the gloomy side of things. God is still on the throne. He will remember His own. When the sun shines, let it shine on you. Grey days will come, but always think of the sunny days which must follow.

There are two sources of joy and happiness for the Christian. Devotional reading of the Bible and prayer. Occasionally when I am reading the Bible and find some new truth I have never seen or been aware of before I can't resist jumping up and praising the Lord - just like stout Cortez when he saw the Pacific but I'm not reading Chapman's Homer. I've been studying the Book of Isaiah recently and practically all the New Testament is in that prophecy. You can see the origins of Paul's writing on every page. Who can doubt there is only one author for the 66 books? And prayer, God answers in so many ways – very often with a much better answer than I was thinking of when I asked Him. He can see the big picture and He knows how to paint it to perfection. The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me (Ps 138 v 8). He will not forsake the works of His hands. And what He does for me He'll do for you.

Cheer up my brother. Live in the sunshine. Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say Rejoice.