

*Fresh
And
Flourishing*



Fresh and Flourishing

“Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” Psalm 92:13-15

Recently someone handed me a copy of an article that my late father, Ralph D. Gage, had written. I'm not sure exactly when this article was written or if it ever appeared in any publication. It is not dated; however, the ideas expressed lead me to believe that this was written later in his life. The perspective is that of a man who has lived long enough to understand both the enthusiasm of youth and the experience of older age.

It is not unusual for the older generation to have doubts about a younger generation coming

along behind them. Even Aristotle had a few choice words for the younger generation of his day. Sometimes our assessment of a situation may be accurate and sometimes it may be inaccurate, but we generally work from the principles upon which we have framed our own lives to predict what we believe will be the future. In this article my fa-

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ther expresses an opinion that things seemed to be falling apart. Recent surveys of religious beliefs recorded by the University of Chicago's General Social Survey indicate that Americans who say they believe in God is at its lowest since at least the early 1970's. The data comes from polls of 58,893 respondents to the General Social Survey, a nationally representative survey of U.S. adults of all ages administered between 1972



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Paul did not know the date of the Lord's second coming to this earth; no one is privy to that information (Matthew 24:36). But the apostle was determined to supply needed guidance for future generations. He wrote, for example, about why we must observe the Lord's Supper and how it should be done. He then added this statement: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

"Till He comes" might be this afternoon, or it might be 2,000 years from now. It doesn't matter, for we have been given all the instruction we need to live godly and righteous lives (2 Peter 1:3).

This Book, the Bible, is God's archives for any who desire to live the abundant life and ultimately reach heaven. The pages of my personal Bible may yellow and tear with age. God will see to it that generations yet unborn (if there be such) will be able to know the truth. It is just as Isaiah declared long ago: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

... Timothy D. Hall
Lightgrams 11/12/2009

We live in a time of transition, an uneasy era which is likely to endure for the rest of this century. During the period we may be tempted to abandon some of the time-honored principles and commitments which have been proven during the difficult times of past generations. We must never yield to this temptation. Our American values are not luxuries, but necessities - not the salt in our bread, but the bread itself.—Jimmy Carter (1924 -), in his farewell address

There is a mysterious cycle in human events. To some generations much is given. Of other generations much is expected. This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882 - 1945)

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For Future Generations

When I was young, I had little interest in my ancestors. That has changed as I've gotten older. I sometimes scour the Internet searching for tidbits of information about any of a number of people listed on my family tree. When I discover that a great grandfather, for example, served in the Civil War, or that my grandfather's brother attended medical school in Louisville, I get excited. I often find myself wishing that more details had been preserved for future generations.

That wish helps to explain why I have spent time in recent years digitizing photos and documents. I have already worn out one scanner and will probably go through another one or two in the years ahead. Family photographs that are beginning to yellow are now in digital form, safe from the effects of light, heat and humidity. Soon I'll be turning my attention to those old Super-8 home movie reels.

Many government bodies have realized the same need to archive for the future. Volumes of marriage and real estate records have been lost forever as court houses have succumbed to fires and floods. Digital records have been made of old volumes that survive, and backup copies are stored in multiple locations.

Future generations will have access to that information.

The apostle John knew that future generations would need to know about Jesus Christ. He had been privileged to see Jesus' work in person, but his life span was limited. That's why he was led (by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:20,21) to record some of his

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memories of Jesus. He elaborated in John 20:30,31: "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."

No, you and I were not present when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee. We didn't witness His healing of the blind or the lame, nor did we hear Him command Lazarus to come forth from the tomb. But thanks to the archives God arranged, we have easy access to such information. And our faith in Jesus can grow when we read those archives (see Romans 10:17).

and 2014 and the results were published in *Sage Open*, an academic journal. It appears that there was some foundation to the assertion that some things were beginning to crack. According to the survey those who say they don't believe in God climbed from 13 percent to 22 percent. However, in an interesting twist, nonreligious people are twice as likely to believe in an afterlife today than those in the 1980's. "It's an indication that people believe they don't have to do all the work, they don't have to pray and go to church, but they will still enjoy all the benefits of an afterlife," said Ryne Sherman, assistant professor of psychology at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, who helped conduct the survey.

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Older people tend to be the most religious and saw the smallest shifts in habits over time. The study found larger religious declines among whites than blacks and larger declines in the West and Northeast than in the South. Sherman commented, "We think it may be driven by cultural shifts in individualism. Americans have become more individualistic and expect more entitlements and things like that."

It would appear from some of the findings of this survey that the Burger King slogan rules the day, "Have It Your Way." We are a generation of fast food, instant gratification and high jinx entertainment. While there are signs among some religious commentators that the entertainment factor in church services are being questioned, many church services more resemble a rock concert than a solemn assembly of the saints. The pundits say that things must be fast paced and energized. One wonders if it is possible for people to be expected to comprehend a 30-minute exhortation. Perhaps we could invent some kind of "like" board and all people would have to do is just "like" the sermon just as we "like" so many other things on Facebook. That way there would be no need to listen to and digest the content. We could just "like" it and then move on to something else.

Here are some other findings from the survey:

Those who identified their religion as "none" increased from 7 percent to 21 percent.

Those who never attend religious services doubled to 26 percent.

Those who say they never pray leaped from 3 percent to 15 percent.

Those who believe in an afterlife stayed flat at 79 percent among churchgoers, but among non-churchgoers it increased from 7 percent to 15 percent.

Here are a couple of final comments regarding the survey. Jean M. Twenge, psychology professor at San Diego State University states, "The large declines in religious practice among young adults are also further evidence that millennials are the least religious generation in memory, and possibly in American history." Ryne Sherman says, "It also appears that groups with relatively high social power are less likely to see themselves as having a significant need for religion or God in recent years."

Instead of being thankful we have become entitled.

The last comment by Sherman may be one of the most significant. The generations since the 1950's have been a privileged class. We have had it good for the most part. Even some of the less fortunate among us have lived like kings when compared with a lot of people in the world. We may have found it difficult to handle our prosperity. Instead of being thankful we have become entitled. Instead of humility before an almighty God we are arrogant before whatever

powers that exist. We are at ease in Zion and are trusting in Mount Samaria (Amos 6:1).

Even in the midst of unbelief and decay, the prophets of old held out hope for a time of restoration. Amos confidently proclaims, "On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old..." (Amos 9:11).

We certainly pray that we will see the day when people will return to God in huge numbers. A day when they will once again desire to enter his courts with thanksgiving and praise him for his goodness and mercy. A time of refreshing from the Lord when those of all generations will believe that an humble obedience in the Father's house is far better than all the enticements of the far country.

...lsg

"One generation passes away, and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever."

Ecclesiastes 1:4

Through the Year

God be with you in the Springtime
When the violets unfold,
And the buttercups and cowslips
Fill the fields with yellow gold;
In the time of apple blossoms,
When the happy bluebirds sing,
Filling all the world with gladness—
God be with you in the Spring!

God be with you in the Summer,
When the sweet June roses blow,
When the bobolinks are laughing
And the brooks with music flow;
When the fields are white with daises
And the days are glad and long—
God be with you in the Summer,
Filling all your world with song.

God be with you in the Autumn,
When the birds and flowers have fled,
And along the woodland pathways
Leaves are falling, gold and red;
When the summer lies behind you,
In the evening of the year—
God be with you in the Autumn,
Then to fill you heart with cheer.

God be with you in the Winter,
When the snow lies deep and white,
When the sleeping fields are silent
And the stars gleam cold and bright.
When the hand and heart are tired
With life's long and weary quest—
God be with you in the Winter,
Just to guide you into rest.

Julian S. Cutler

Sepulveda Bulletin 7/8/12

may our hearts be gladdened as we think of His love. May we all meditate upon the many ways that God speaks to us in the glory of the sky, in the beauty of nature, in the budding of spring-time, in the voices of friends, through the love of our elderly and most of all as He speaks through His Son Jesus. May we not only think about the comforts of this life but let us look for the challenge that comes to us by working in His Kingdom.

We are always asking the Lord to heal our bodies when we are sick. Should we not be more interested in asking the Lord to humble us when we feel so self-sufficient and grant us the will to obey what the Word says.

THANKFUL FOR OUR ELDERLY

Let us give thanks for the wisdom the experience and fortitude of the elderly that we still have with us and for the work left us by those that have gone to meet their reward. There is no field of human endeavor in which we have not profited by their labors. May we be like those who lived a life of humility which enabled them to obey your word. Let us do what our hands find to do as we serve in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord.

...Ralph D. Gage (1915-2005)

Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the lord which He had done for Israel.

Joshua 24:29-31

IN MEMORY OF THOSE GONE AND IN HONOR OF THOSE PRESENT

From the modern much-about-nothing, I would like to escape with you today and walk down the lanes of memory. This will take many of us back to a little country church of our childhood where we sat with our fathers and mothers on Sunday mornings and heard long and powerful sermons from the Word of God. The long and loud sermons did not bother us. You see, we met just once a week because of the inconvenient way of travel and the long distance we had to travel to church. I can remember when we traveled eight miles in a wagon to meet with kindred spirits in the Lord to remember the sacrifice our Lord made for us.

Some who came from a distance would camp for the duration of the meeting.

Sometime during the summer months after the crops were laid by we had what to us was the big revival meeting. We would sing Amazing Grace, All Hail Immanuel, Sweet By and By, etc. There were always morning services during these revivals with lunch spread on the ground out under the trees, and sometimes for the evening meal also. Some who came from a distance would camp for the duration of the meeting. Others stayed with relatives and friends. It was a

glorious occasion. I suppose that is why they acquired the name, Camp Meeting. At each service there was a powerful sermon, loud and long. In fact, they were so loud that hardly anyone went to sleep despite their length.

If the preacher did not have the elegance of an Apollos, he at least had the conviction of an Aquila! They made no dandy references to human philosophy but preached God Almighty, Jesus died for us, sin is black, eternity is long, the Bible is true, let's go back to the Bible, speak where it speaks and be silent where it is silent. That was their message. There were souls to be saved. The Gospel is God's power to save and the sinner had the CHOICE OF ACCEPTING OR REJECTING THE MESSAGE FROM GOD'S WORD.

As they sang 'Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy,' there were many happy conversions. We felt it was good to be at church. In memory I go back to my great-granddad and grandmother. They were converted to the truth out of the Methodist practice of sprinkling for baptism and were immersed into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They became members of the Church of Christ.

My grandparents on both sides of my family were members of the Church of Christ. My dad and mother had ten children. Six of them reached adulthood while four died early in life. Whatever mistakes my dad and mother made in rearing us children, and I'm sure they made some mistakes, they were overcome by their love for Jesus and the church He bought with His blood. Their faithfulness led all of their children to Jesus and also all of their in-laws. My dad would never allow himself to be called a preacher, yet he preached to his children by life and in word and did a lot of the preaching in the churches with which he was associated. Frank Duckworth and Alva Johnson were friends of the family and many other families as they conducted meetings throughout our brotherhood.

Those were plain simple days and those mentioned were plain simple folks. As I think back to those days and those who lived and labored in them I feel no pity that they passed away before the pandemonium of Modernism broke out. In these modern times we have to bribe people to get them to come to church by serving some enticement of entertainment, along with a watered-down gospel filled with psychology and human wisdom. These old veterans would not fit into the present day environment that permeates our congregations. I'm sure that

my dad and my granddads would not be very impressive in the pulpits of today unless we would be impressed with their sincerity, honesty and dedicated devotion. The things that impressed us about all of these men was their sincerity, honesty and love for the souls of men. While these are the things that God looks with favor upon we human

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beings seldom do! I have no desire to tell these men what they missed by being born too soon. I'm afraid if I should point out the advantage of speed they might say, "What's the use, you are going nowhere!" Just look at our radio and television. "So what! What have you to broadcast?"

We cannot paint around those old soldiers of the cross any brighter halo than really is theirs. While we make allowance for some ignorance, for undue pride, for many grievous faults better left untold, like us they were human. We will hurry to say that what they failed to understand about the scriptures they made up for in application of what they understood. They did not concentrate so much on HOW GOD CREATED THINGS, and how He works, as

upon He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

They may not have made religion their business at all times but neither did they make their business their religion. What they lacked in organizing for God they made up in agonizing with Him. Their summer converts may have begun in a revival of fire only to live the rest of their lives in smoke, as some today say, but perhaps it is better to be even a smoking flax than never to have known the flame.

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In this civilization, that seems to be at the point of breaking up, some are beginning to discover that the faith of our fathers is not the backward proposition that those who have received a little learning think that it is. In our sophisticated society all who do not have a college education are considered dumb, dumb, dumb!

Today many of our present senior citizens have retired from some of life's activities. They certainly are not to be pitied. They are nearer the goal for which we all strive, a long and useful life, than we who are younger. I certainly would not wish for them the tragedy of having to start all over in this modern world.

Too many times our attitude for the elderly has been that they have outlived their time or we have been so tied up with this old earth and its activities that our attitude has been you are older than I and likely you will have to leave this good old earth behind before I will and I will get to continue on in this good life while you are doomed to tragedy.

Too often the attitude of the elderly is, as they think concerning the younger, "Oh if I could only be back young like you." This attitude is downright unchristian. The old and the young must blend together. This is God's way for our lives. "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

The work of the older is the foundation of the work of the younger. Without the work of the elderly, both dead and present, we would not have many things that we have today. Their toil and sweat and blood has made the present life possible for us. Many is the time they have suffered privation, depression and hard labor to make our present way of life possible. LET US NEVER BE UNMINDFUL OF THEM.

So let us humble ourselves before God, both young and old, as we think of His holiness and