

The Tanner St Church of Christ meets each Lord's Day beginning with Bible classes at **9:30 AM**. We continue with our worship at **10:20 AM** and again at **5:00 PM**. We also meet each Wednesday evening at **7:00 PM** for Bible study and worship. Our meeting place is located about ¾ of a mile from I30 at 1512 Tanner St in Malvern, AR.

If you have questions about what we believe and teach, please visit our website, tannerst.com to listen to sermons or read past articles from our bulletin. Or you can contact us and we will be glad to find a convenient time to study with you.

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Consider: Luke 13:3 Needed News

Joyce Venable, Dolline Fain and **Conrad Harris** continue to deal with their respective health issues. **Dolline's** health seems to be going down. **Joyce Venable's** nephew passed away this past week.

Paula Laubach is dealing with a respiratory infection.

Ricky Ragsdale came home from the hospital last week.

David Laubach is in Dallas this weekend.

John & Phyllis Jackson are still vacationing on the West Coast.

Chrystal Keisler Smith and the boys are travelling back from their trip to Europe this weekend.

As we go about our weekly activities let us make certain that we are doing what we can to demonstrate our care and concern for our brethren. We have some of our number who live alone and would greatly appreciate a call or visit from time to time. Those who are sick might prefer a call, but those who are limited by age would probably enjoy visiting with you for a short while sometime. We have time for clubs, recreation and family. What about for our brethren?

Seeking His Righteousness

"...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.." Matthew 6:33

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Paul The Aged

Roger Shouse

Philemon 9 *"yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—since I am such a person as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Christ Jesus."*

In the short and personal letter from Paul to Philemon, the slave owner, whose possession, Onesimus, ran away, we learn many lessons about appealing to people. Onesimus was now a Christian, that was a game changer. He somehow found Paul and had become very helpful and useful to him. But there remained the right thing to do. The right thing isn't always convenient nor easy. Paul could have kept the slave and that would have been the end of the story. But the right thing prevailed. The right thing was to send the run-a-way back home where he belonged. That decision was full of pressure, stress and fear. How would he be treated by Philemon? Most run-a-ways had to learn a lesson. Some were injured, some were killed. If nothing was done, what signal would that send to other slaves? What would other slave owners think about Philemon if he was too lenient? Sometimes we can talk ourselves out of doing the right thing simply because of all of the possible situations that we think up. Do the right thing.

Onesimus was sent back, carrying this letter, to Philemon who lived in Colossae. In the Colossian letter, probably carried at the same time, by the same people, there are general instructions about masters and slaves. Those instructions, with this personal letter, would pave the way for the right thing to be done in the right way.

In our verse today, Paul had stated that he could have "ordered" or commanded Philemon to accept the run-a-way back. Instead, he appealed to love's sake. Love forgives. Love gives another chance. Love thinks the best. Love would allow Onesimus the opportunity to change. We do better when we are driven by love rather than commands. The same results may be accomplished, but the way you get there and the feeling it gives you is so much different. Love appeals to the heart. Commands appeal to the mind.

Stating all of this, Paul reveals something about himself. It is a

personal note. Three simple words, “Paul, the aged.” The NIV uses the expression, “Paul, the old man.” Some would take offense to that. Some tend to think of old as over the hill and beyond usefulness. Some would say it’s time for the rocking chair and the assisted living home. Had Paul not stated this, most would not have seen this in his travels and writings. He is a busy person. He endures much, teaches many and travels far. This is certainly not the time for his rocking chair. The definition of “aged” is much like the definition for “rich,” it’s not us.

There are special advantages that senior Christians have that others do not. First, the energy of taking care of kids, the expense of raising them and the necessity of working everyday is not there for most senior Christians. Simply put, senior Christians have more time than younger families. The clock doesn’t wake them up demanding that they roll out of bed, often still tired and longing for a few more minutes of sleep, and head to work. The senior Christian has time to do things and time to make a difference in people’s lives. Time to share deep lessons with grandchildren. Time to teach Bible classes. Time to help out where it is needed. Time to visit. Time to write cards. Also, with time, many, many senior Christians have a wealth of Biblical resources and knowledge. Imagine the number of sermons that one has listened to, the number of Bible classes they attended, the articles that they have read—there is a store house of knowledge that is equal to the hours of a PhD in most universities. What advantage it is to have senior Christians who can keep the younger set to stay the course and answer many of their questions. Is it any wonder that older women were to teach younger women and that one term for leaders in congregation is “elders.” Spiritual experience is priceless. Younger heads need to appreciate that. Many congregations have ignored and moved away from the older voice. As a result, those fast paced, younger believers have drifted off to la-la land and are dancing and clapping their way to Satan because they have ignored true Biblical principles. Wiser heads would have warned them. Wiser heads would have steered them to the right path. But, as it is so many times, the older voice was silenced and the younger and foolish advice sought, just as Solomon’s son did generations ago, and disaster loomed on the horizon. Use those heads of experience. Don’t ignore them.

The church as a whole hasn’t given much thought about what to do with the older preacher. Paul, the aged, presents a problem for some today. The older model that many have followed is to use the preacher like a pack mule. Work him and work him until he wears out. At that point, he is replaced with a younger and stronger mule who will carry on the work. But what to do with that old one is a thought that few

have considered. After years of service, the old preacher, still wanting to teach, is left behind by some who feel that he is too old and will not relate well with the young people. A younger preacher is hired and the older one is forgotten. Some simply retire. Some, because of financial reasons, cannot. Those few try to find another congregation that will give them a chance. If they are lucky, there will be a small congregation meeting in the area that the preacher tries to teach and encourage until the Lord takes him. For others, it means that they must move in the senior years, to find a congregation that will give him a chance. That’s hard and sad. Often, he doesn’t want to move, but necessity demands that he has to.

Once in a while, we hear of a congregation that allows the older preacher to remain on and be useful, while a younger preacher is hired to carry the heavy day-to-day work. That’s rare. Not many places can afford to do that, nor want to do that.

I’m not sure what the best answer to the aged preacher is. I hope that these writings will cause some to think about it for the first time. I hope that some will see the value of honoring a person who has poured decades into the heart of a congregation. I hope some would think about positive ways to take care of the aged servant of God. Younger preachers need to give this some thought. If the Lord allows, they too will be old some day. How you see a congregation taking care of the aged preacher is how they will take care of you when it’s your turn.

I’ve been around some old soldiers of Christ. I like them. They have funny stories and great insight into life. Most are humble to the core. Most are kind, sweet and just love Jesus. Most realize that they are not as sharp as they once were. They know that they miss things here and there. It bothers them greatly. Most simply want to be useful in the kingdom. Some, with a tear in their eyes, realize that they are no longer needed, wanted or used. No one calls them for advice anymore. No one asks them to come and preach for them. No one wants to read an article that they could author. They sit silently in a pew, wondering if this is how it is supposed to be. Tons of knowledge, love and wisdom, only to be silenced because of their age.

Paul, the aged. God included those two simple words, “the aged,” for a reason. I wonder if we have really given thought to that properly as the Lord would want us to. Maybe it’s time that we do.

[Brother Shouse has many articles such as this one available on his website JumpStartsDaily.Com. He presents a new one each weekday and all that I have read have been encouraging and informative. DLH)