

The Faithful Elderly in Their Sunset Years!

June 19, 2007

A few weeks ago I received a phone call from a sister in Indiana who told me that Hazel Loughmiller had died. Upon receiving this news my heart sank with deep sorrow and my mind flashed back over the past 25 years that I had known this sweet lady. This wonderful sister in Christ, along with her husband Joe, who preceded her in death by a few years, were instrumental in Ruth and I becoming acquainted at the first Lebanon meeting that began in 1981. From that point on the Loughmillers were a source of strength and encouragement to this 'younger' couple through the years.

Ruth and I dearly loved Joe and Hazel and would often drop by to see them in our travels back and forth from Ohio and Oklahoma. Sometimes we'd get to their house late but we always knew where the key to the back door was located. They were always kind, loving, and hospitable. There have been many conversations that Ruth and I had with these great stalwarts of the faith in the basement kitchen where Hazel spent most of her time. Their love and work for the Lord and His church was unparalleled in many ways. Even in their declining years they always found a way to come to Cincinnati's "Young People's Meeting", and during those years I would ask Joe to take part in the meeting. Out of a deep respect for Joe, along with Arvil Brumfield, another old soldier of the cross, there were always 2 prayers respectively reserved in the arrangements at the final service of the aforementioned meeting, that is until they were no longer able to make it. Brother Joe passed away about 4 years ago and brother Arvil became too feeble to make the 3 hour trip from Huntington, West Virginia. These brothers and sister in Christ have held a special place in the hearts of many people and their love and works shall not soon be forgotten. Brother Arvil is still living in West Virginia and is a faithful Christian. O how he was such an encourager to those who preached. As every preacher would attest, if you preached the truth while Arvil was present you were guaranteed an 'Amen'. While the scores of 'Amens' that I used to hear him bellow from the pews have been silenced by feebleness, they still echo loudly in my ear today. For as long as I've known brother Arvil, Jesus has been his passion, conviction his motivation!

I'm continually humbled by my "elderly" brothers and sisters in Christ. Those just mentioned are only a fraction of the many who have not vacillated in their faith, who have kept their feet firmly planted in God's truth when faced with the turbulent storms of religious compromise, and

who have determined to lift high the blood stained banner of Jesus Christ regardless the cost (Luke 14:25-35). They, and so many others like them, are always due our respect and honor for who they are and what they have done, and continually do for the church. Their undaunted example and determination to remain faithful is so inspiring. We have some among our number in this congregation for whom I shall ever be indebted; others I'm beginning to know and have a deeper appreciation for their love and desire to do the Lord's will. Indeed "the silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). And now in their sunset years let the younger "rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man..." (Leviticus 19:32). Paul said, "Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father...older women as mothers..." (1 Timothy 5:1-2); and we know as children we are to honor our father and mother (Ephesians 6:1; Hebrews 12:9). In our youth let's not take for granted their example or disdain their wise counsel; instead let's honor, respect, encourage, visit, and hold them up in adoration and thanksgiving.

Though feeble in mind and body the 'elderly' demonstrate such fidelity in spirit. When their sight is weakened by age they are still able to keep their eyes on the great Physician; when their ears have difficulty hearing they can still listen to what the Master says; and when their words are somewhat softened they are still able to sweetly whisper a prayer and speak of the goodness of God. These are the folks who often think of "home" but usually in a different light than those of younger years. While their light in life slowly ebbs toward the evening shades of death they have the assurance of knowing that there will be a greater joy when the sun shines again in the resurrection morning; and in part, it'll be due to their faithfulness during the sunset years of their life here on earth. As Virgil P. Brock once wrote in song - "Beyond the sunset no clouds will gather, no storms will threaten, no fears annoy; O day of gladness, O day unending, Beyond the sunset, eternal joy!" To all the faithful elderly brothers and sisters in Christ, thank you for your exemplary life! May the Lord bless each one of you.

BJF Newsletter 041507 Volume 1 Number 7