



## THE OLDER PEOPLE

*Levi Sides, Jasper, AL*

“...And the beauty of old men is the grey head” (Proverbs 20:29).

There is much said about the young people these days, and many programs planned around and for them—workshops, camps, social events, etc. In fact, hardly a service goes by that there is not some special attention called to the fact that “the young people are doing this or that.” This is good!

It dawned on me that there is perhaps a segment of church membership that is being overlooked—the “older” people. Actually, our senior citizens constitute a greater percentage of our population now than ever before.

Growing old is God’s plan and is a natural process which should not be feared. To fear old age is like being afraid to look at the view after one has trudged carefully the rugged mountain-side.

Many have been the accomplishments of those who had lived the majority of their lifetime. Tennyson at eighty wrote “Crossing the Bar.” Cato learned Greek at eighty. At fifty, Chaucer wrote “The Canterbury Tales.” Noah Webster at seventy wrote his monumental dictionary. Observe some examples of “older people” who are still “living” and who are making noble contributions to His Church and to society.

God can use the elderly. Our faith is strengthened when we study the lives of God’s “older people” like Moses, Joshua, Abraham, and Paul. God can use you too!

God’s “older people” are asked to instruct (Titus 2:1-5), to counsel (1 Kings 12; Job 12:12), to set the good example (Titus 2:1-8), and to build for the future (Matthew 25:34-46).

The value of an older person’s experience and influence is seen especially as he helps to temper the ambitions of younger people. The younger person is to respect (Ephesians 6:2-3), to support (1 Timothy 5:4-16), and to consider the “older person.”

Too often “older people” get to feeling like they have outgrown their usefulness and are nothing but a burden to their loved ones. Whether an older person is a burden or not depends a lot on his own outlook and attitude toward life. Age generally does not bring about a change of character. It only solidifies and magnifies those qualities that have been a part of his life for years.

Don’t lose the spirit of adventure and the desire to learn and grow. Keep a good sense of humor and you will make your loved ones and friends rejoice that God has spared you so they too can be blessed with your life and influence.

WOT

## EDITORIAL

**HOW DID WE GET THE BIBLE?**

In a nation built upon freedom and liberty, we often take for granted the great privileges afforded us in this country. Our Constitution guarantees us certain freedoms, among these being the freedom of religion. We are able to run out and buy a Bible for next to nothing in our nation, and most families have two, three, four or more Bibles in their possession. We often take for granted this magnificent blessing. Because the Bible is so abundant in our land, we may never have stopped to consider how we came to have the Bible in the first place. Is the Bible I have really God's word? How can I rest assured that the copy of the Bible I have in my hands has truly been delivered faithfully from God to man? Is the Bible just a product of man's contrivance, or is it in truth the word of God, a revelation of Divine wisdom which will lead all who follow it to eternal bliss in heaven?

The Bible makes numerous claims to be the word of God. Over two hundred times in the Old Testament can one find phrases such as, "And the Lord spake unto...", "And Moses spake all the words which the Lord commanded him...", etc. In the New Testament, Paul told the young preacher Timothy that, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The word translated "inspiration" comes from the Greek *theophneustos*, literally meaning God-breathed. That is, every word of the Bible came directly from the mouth of God. Just how did God go about transmitting His spoken word into written form, such that we as feeble creatures could know and understand God's will for us? The Bible gives us insight as to how God accomplished the task of seeing that His will was put into written form, and preserved so that all generations may come to know Him and be saved through His Son. David proclaimed, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). To the young prophet

Jeremiah God would say, "But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak...Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jeremiah 1:7,9). Peter would write, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:19-21). God, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, guided these men as they wrote the Scriptures. God selected every last word, ensuring that His will would be given to man exactly as He wanted.

Some might ask, "But how can I be confident that the Bible has come to me as God gave it, when it has been some 2000 years since it was written?" Consider that the Bible was written by approximately 40 men over a period of about 1600 years. In spite of differences in education, social status, wealth, vocation, etc., these 40 men were used by God to put His word into written form, and all without error or inconsistency of any kind! What makes God's word even more amazing is that there is no disagreement with what Moses wrote in the book of Genesis, to what John wrote in the Revelation. Hundreds of years between the two, and not one error of any kind to be found in God's Holy Word! God completed His revelation to man at the close of the first century, when John wrote the final book of the Bible. If God could complete the Bible through the hands of these men over such a long period of time, then certainly God could see that His word has been faithfully preserved down to this moment in time for us today.

The Bible has come to us today just as it was originally written. The Old Testament was written

primarily in the Hebrew language, while the New Testament was written in koine (common) Greek [a dead language now, somewhat akin to modern Greek]. Through the years, the Bible was translated into various languages. For centuries, the Catholic Church saw to it that the Bible was only translated into Latin. This ensured that only the well-educated could understand the Scriptures. Since each copy of the Scriptures was hand-copied, individual copies of the Bible were few and far between. The cost to produce them and the time involved in transcribing them caused the churches literally to chain the Bible to the pulpit. With the invention of the printing press, and the clamoring of some who called for translations of the Scriptures into the language of the common people, the Bible soon found its way into the hands of most every family. Men like Martin Luther arose, translating the Scriptures into German. Others such as John Wycliffe and William Tyndale translated the Bible into English. With each translation of the Scriptures into another language, great care was taken to ensure that it was translated faithfully.

With each passing day, more and more evidence is uncovered that lends further proof to the accuracy of Bible translations. One needs to do a little research when selecting a Bible translation. Some “translations” are nothing more than commentaries, meaning that an individual or committee puts what they think the Bible says rather than offering a literal translation of the Scriptures. The New International Version, Today’s English Version, Phillip’s Translation, and many others are nothing more than commentaries in disguise. There are many reliable translations that are readily available to anyone. These would include the King James Version, the New King James Version, the American Standard Version, and the English Standard Version. These (particularly the KJV and ASV) have stood the test of time, and have proven over and over again to be very, very accurate translations of both the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament.

How did we get the Bible? God, in His great love and mercy, revealed to us His will through the hands of faithful men who were carried along by the Holy Spirit to preserve God’s word in written form for all generations. Let us not take for granted how we got the Bible; let us not take for granted that we have the Bible. Let us thank God daily that He has allowed us the opportunity to know Him, and to be

saved eternally by following His will. Because God made sure His word was transmitted to us faithfully, we can say as did the psalmist, “For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

*WOT*

## FROM WHERE I SIT

Eva Nell Brown Naramore

Across the lawn from where I sit,  
With what I see, how could I fret?  
O God, help me to understand  
You hold the future in your hand.

So calm and still the morning dawn,  
What each day brings, to you is known.  
With darkness gone, the sun shines through  
The shady trees from where I view.

These windows are my picture frames,  
Where squirrels sometimes play mating games.  
And mocking birds dance on my walk,  
They must be thinking happy thoughts.

Sometimes they light on electric wire;  
High power lines that’s full of fire,  
But they don’t care, ‘cause it don’t hurt  
Unless they put a foot on dirt.

This just makes me believe more strong  
In God, that he is never wrong.  
All things are his, both great and small.  
He even notes the sparrow’s fall.

Three children live in sight of me,  
Families and loved ones I can see.  
Grandchildren playing in the yard,  
And this for me is great reward.

Across the lawn from where I sit,  
With what I see, how could I fret?  
O God, help me to understand,  
You hold the future in your hand.

## IS IT WORTH YOUR SOUL?

*Kevin Beard, Fayette, AL*

Some things in life are always right and some things in life are always wrong. God has spoken on these things and His Word guides us in life regarding them. Other things in life are neither right nor wrong and thus a Christian may choose to participate in them or not, depending on his conscience, the circumstances, the way his actions influence others, and so on. Wisdom and knowledge are needed to determine the difference between these things, and if something is neither right nor wrong, when it is better to participate or to abstain. Problems sometimes arise when Christians have different opinions regarding these kinds of matters. Paul's instructions on handling these kinds of problems can be found in the fourteenth chapter of Romans.

A similar problem arises when Christians find it difficult to ascertain whether God does indeed allow some action, or whether He has condemned it. One particular issue that seems to be overly burdened with this kind of quandary is the issue of divorce and remarriage. The Lord's instruction in this should be easy enough to understand:

“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (Matt. 19:9).

Jesus identified one, and only one reason for a person to divorce and remarry and that is if his spouse has sex with another person. If that happens, the innocent spouse may divorce his sexually unfaithful spouse and marry someone else. He is not required to do so, but God allows him that option. When someone divorces his spouse for some other reason and marries someone else, Jesus said he is committing adultery. The same is true for the one who is divorced (whether because he was sexually involved with another person or not): if he marries again after the divorce, he is committing adultery. This teaching is really very simple.

The difficulty arises when people start to introduce what they consider to be extenuating circumstances. “What if the people were not Christians before the divorce and then obeyed the gospel after the remarriage?” “What if one of them was a Chris-

tians and the other was not?” “What if one person wanted the divorce but the other one didn't?” There are so many different possible scenarios that many people get confused about the simple instruction Jesus gave. Add to that the highly emotional nature of the issue and this quickly becomes one of the more controversial issues to discuss.

Whether it's the divorce and remarriage issue or any other issue, we can understand the Lord's will on any subject if we will simply devote ourselves to a diligent study of His word (see Eph. 3:4). But even aside from that, faithful Christians who are serious about going to heaven can usually make wise choices, even in matters where they may not be completely sure what the Lord's will is. All it often takes is to ask this simple question: “Is it worth your soul?” In many of the kinds of circumstances where people may be confused about whether an action is acceptable or not, there is this common factor: the action in question might be acceptable with God, but if it is not, doing it will bring God's condemnation. So here is where the question just posed can be of help.

Jesus said, “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). More people need to give serious thought to this truth. Everything tied to this world will come to an end in this world, either in death, or when Jesus returns. However, the soul is not tied to this world in that way. When man dies, “the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). After this, there is the judgment (Heb. 9:27), in which every person will give account of how he lived his life (2 Cor. 5:10).

Whether or not someone has studied the Scriptures thoroughly enough to ascertain the Lord's will on the issues he is contemplating, the value of his soul ought to help determine a wise course of action. A wise man would never trade a priceless treasure for worthless trinket; yet many people trade the only truly priceless treasure they possess for the worthless things of the world. If there is any question at all about God's approval of something you might do, is it worth you soul?

**WOT**

# THE FIRE BURNING WITHIN

Tom Moore, Temple, TX

Jeremiah is one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. At times, this honorable seer is referred to as the “weeping prophet,” because of the heartfelt messages he proclaimed. “And if I say, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I cannot contain” (Jer. 20:9). These words were uttered in a time of great turmoil and ridicule as a result of Jeremiah’s preaching. The seer informs us that he was trying to keep God’s word to himself to ease his woes, but found that the woes within him only increased. Jeremiah could not help but proclaim God’s word because of the fire burning within him. God’s word in Jeremiah was like a fire burning in a wooden box – it just wouldn’t stay in.

Nearly seven hundred years later, Peter and John were preaching the word of God and the priests and Sadducees became very angry at the apostles’ teaching. As a result, Peter and John were thrown into prison, and on the following day were threatened and told not to preach any more in the name of Christ. “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). These courageous apostles informed those who had threatened them that God’s word was burning within them and they could not be kept from proclaiming the blessed Gospel.

Jeremiah, Peter and John all had something we need a little more of – a FIRE BURNING WITHIN! There are too many Christians who no longer have, or who have never had a fire burning within. Too many are allowing “any little old thing” to keep them from spreading the good news of the Gospel and opposing that which is contrary to truth. Paul fearlessly declared, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation...” (Rom. 1:16). In light of this great power, should not the fire of God’s word be burning within us?

The reason men like Jeremiah had the fire burning within them was that they knew of the seriousness of making known the saving message of God

in its purity. Proclaiming God’s word is serious business for “for all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23), sin separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2), and “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). Sin comes as a result of disobeying God’s word (1 Jn. 3:4). Thus, as long as man stays in ignorance of God’s word he is without hope.

Jeremiah had a fire burning within because he cared for the lost souls of men – he cared about their eternal destiny. How concerned are we about the lost souls of men? Do we hurt knowing that millions are dying without the Gospel? Are we going to sit idly while our friends and loved ones die in sin, or will we have the fire burning within? James wrote, “...that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins” (Jam. 5:20). How much do you care for the lost?

**WOT**

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# IF THE WORLD ONLY UNDERSTOOD JOHN 3:16

Wayne Jones, San Marcos, TX

There has long been a connection between athletics and religion, particularly on the professional level. It is common for a baseball player to make gestures toward the heavens in acknowledgement of God's blessings. Routinely a football player will kneel in prayer and point toward the sky after scoring a touchdown. Athletes of all genres will customarily conclude that their accomplishments are by God's assistance and thus give Him credit for their sporting victories. Needless to say, we find no place in Scripture where God is concerned about sports or secular competition. His desire is to see men obtain a crown of righteousness, not a championship ring.

Because of the abundance of these references, I thought I had seen it all. That is, until this year's college National Championship game between the University of Florida and the University of Oklahoma. During that game a close up of Florida quarterback, Tim Tebow, revealed that "John 3:16" was visible in the eye black under his eyes. Little did I know that Tebow, in previous games, had done the same thing with "Philippians 4:13." I was somewhat impressed by his boldness and creativity. However, upon further reflection, it led to this thought: What if the world truly understood the message of John 3:16?

It might be on a random roadside billboard with no other words attached or on a sign at an NFL football game being held by a man with a rainbow wig, but, chances are, you will see the inscription "John 3:16" in some unique places. Consequently, many people, religious or not, hold this verse to be the most encompassing verse of the Christian faith. It is often quoted, but not often understood. It is such a commonly used phrase that the popular writer and apostate preacher, Max Lucado, used the numbers "3:16" to title one of his latest books. If it were understood by every person who had ever read it or by everyone who has ever quoted it, what a different world this would be! For the remainder of the space allotted, let us consider some things that would be different if the world only understood John 3:16.

If the world understood John 3:16, they would understand the **Priority of Love**. The story is told of a denominational preacher by the name of Henry Morehouse who preached a series of lessons on the

love of God. On the last night of his series, Morehouse said:

"I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you. Suppose I could borrow Jacob's ladder. Suppose I could ascend that shining stairway until my feet stood on the sapphire pavements of the city of God. Suppose I could find Gabriel, the herald angel who stands in the presence of God. Suppose I could say, 'Tell me, Gabriel, how much does God love the world?' I know what he would say. He would say, 'Henry Morehouse, God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That's how much God loves the world.'"

With love being the central theme of the verse, John G. Butler has commented that John 3:16 shows us the proclamation of God's love, the pattern of God's love, the passion of God's love, the perimeter of God's love, the persistency of God's love, the price of God's love, the prudence of God's love, the proof of God's love, the prerequisite of God's love, the protection of God's love, and the provision of God's love.

God made love a priority in the Old Testament. It was the love that man was to have for God that summed up the first four commandments (Exo. 20:1-11; cf. Matt. 22:37-38). It was the love that man was to have for his fellow man that summed up the last six commandments (Exo. 20:12-17; cf. Matt. 22:39). God has made love a priority for us in the New Testament age (John 14:15; 1 Cor. 13:1-8a; 13; Gal. 5:6). Thanks be to God that He did not merely demand that love be shown, but that He also demonstrated the priority of love in the gift of His Son at Calvary.

If the world understood John 3:16, they would understand the **Price of Salvation**. Living in a society that is "me" oriented and where "give me" is a commonly used phrase, many have trouble adjusting to the high cost of Christianity. Far too many look for handouts and the easy way to be provided by the previous generation, their government, and even their God.

Sadly, many have disregarded plain Bible teachings about counting the cost of salvation (Luke 14:25-33) and what it really takes to follow Christ (Luke 9:23-26). Instead, they focus on passages that emphasize salvation as a gift that is freely given. One such passage is Romans 3:24 where Paul writes: “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” According to Strong’s, the word “freely” means “without cause” and Thayer suggests that it means “undeservedly.” The explanation of the free, undeserved gift was given in detail when Paul later wrote, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6-8). It is given freely because it is undeserved, not because it is costless.

Salvation cost God His only Son. That is the highest price one could ever be asked to pay. John 3:16 emphasizes that fact and elevates that cost. Perhaps there are those reading these words who can identify with the pain that accompanies the death of a child. While it seems natural for children to outlive their parents, due to sickness and circumstance many parents have stood over the graves of their children. Despite the depth of their pain, God’s loss was somewhat different. He *gave* His only son. Christ was not taken by disease nor did He suffer an unexpected tragedy. He was *given* for us. In order to be recipients of the gift of salvation that is provided through the offering of His Son, we must be willing to pay whatever price is necessary. Studied in light of the numerous passages which insist obedience, faithfulness, and sacrifice on the part of the one in need of salvation, it is intellectually and spiritually dishonest to camp out in this beloved passage and claim that salvation does not and should not cost us anything.

If the world understood John 3:16, they would understand the **Peril of Unbelief**. In this verse of love, grace, forgiveness, and salvation, Christ uses a word that is ugly, terrible, and tragic. The word “perish” literally means “to put out of the way entirely, abolish, render useless, to be lost, to be ruined, or to be destroyed.” What a painful and agonizing word and concept that is! Even a God of love and mercy understands the peril a person puts himself in when He chooses not to believe in the Christ. If John 3:16 is the heart of Christianity, then unbelief is a health risk that is firmly pointed out by the reading of

this verse.

Jesus said it this way, “if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). While many view this passage as a Divine threat, it might be better viewed as a statement of fact. There is peril in unbelief. Unbelief in God and His Word kept Adam and Eve from enjoying the garden paradise. Unbelief in God and His Word kept a generation of Israelites from enjoying the land of promise. Unbelief in God and His Word kept Moses from enjoying what God allowed him to view from Mount Pisgah. Even among the two thieves that hung on either side of our Savior, unbelief kept one from enjoying what the other received because of his belief. With the examples of the past in mind, the Hebrews writer warned, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (3:12).

Just as Biblical faith is more than mental or verbal acknowledgement of facts (Jam. 2:19), unbelief is more than the lack of acknowledging those same facts. Unbelief is demonstrated by a lack of action and obedience. Believing in God and avoiding the perils that befall an unbeliever requires a living, vibrant faith. Just a surface reading of Hebrews 11 will verify that such is the case. Men like Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac were not men of faith based on what they said, but rather based on what they did.

John 3:16 should be more than a phrase on a billboard, more than a sign in the endzone, and more than a decoration in eye black. John 3:16, if understood, would open the eyes of the world to the priority of love, the price of salvation, and the peril of unbelief. May we strive to let the words of this passage, sink down into our ears (Luke 9:44) and penetrate our hearts.

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John Phillips, **Exploring the Gospel of John**, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1989, p. 73.

John G. Butler, **Jesus Christ: His Encounters**, Clinton, IA:LBC Publications, 2003, p. 65.

## ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

**QUESTION:** What does 2 Peter 3:12-13 mean?

**ANSWER:** Peter is speaking of the new place of existence for the eternally redeemed – heaven (Rev. 2:7); a place that each faithful Christian should long to be (“looking for and hastening for the coming of the day of God”). God first revealed his plan to create a new existence in Isaiah 65:17-25. The eternal nature of this new heavens and new earth is also emphasized in a similar prophecy given in Isaiah 66:22. In the New Testament the apostle Peter alludes to these prophecies when he speaks of the ascended Christ, “whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3:21). In Romans 8:19-22 the apostle Paul speaks in more detail about the coming day when the present universe will be set free from the curse that has permeated and corrupted it since sin entered it as recorded in Genesis 3:1-19. In 2 Peter 3:10ff, Peter explains that it will happen when “the day of the Lord will come.” God gave John a vision of this new universe: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away” (Rev. 21:1). What John sees in this vision will happen immediately following the final judgment (Rev. 19:11-15). As he stands gazing upon this new world the apostle says he “saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). This, according to Peter, is exactly what Christians should be looking and longing for (i.e., “new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells” – 2 Peter 3:13). Jesus declared that the meek would “inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). If this is beginning to sound a lot like paradise, well, it is; it is heaven!

—Mark N. Posey  
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The words of *Truth*

**Patrick Morrison, editor**

### The Words of Truth

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