

FACING LIFE'S SUNSET TOGETHER

"It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." Zechariah 14:7.

It is a great thing to feel the bounding pulse of youth, to gaze on the purple light of the morning and to feel the intoxication of boundless energy and hope. But, we have seen youth time and again dash its torch to the ground. Napoleon's selfish ambition, like a flaming sky-rocket, at last struck the ground at Waterloo. The genius of Alexander and Burns was quenched at last in the fiery woe of wine. Down through all the ages since, sick beds and police courts and shameful graves have been the portion of youth who have missed the mark of life's highest meaning. Youth is beautiful, but so is a wellspent life ripening into age. The pale greens of spring and the dark greens of summer are wonderful, but they were made for the harvests of autumn.

Everywhere and in all of these age groups you will find lovers of home. No matter where we were born, home is home, and no other place on earth is just like it. Children never outgrow home influence. Memories increase in richness and glory with the years. Both men and women have made untold sacrifices in order to maintain the unity of their homes. What countless joys and sorrows mingle there! Nowhere is heaven so real, nor pleasures so enduring as in the home. Even though pain and trial mingle with the joys and peace of a home, it is still a place which has a charm that abides and thrills. Men labor a lifetime to maintain their homes. They will gladly suffer in defense of their homes and even die for them. Through sickness and sorrow lovers of home remain true and loyal.

All of us know what a tremendous hold home has on each of our hearts. Here were born our aspirations and our dreams, our yearnings and our visions. Home, home, sweet, sweet home! Nothing else on earth ties men, women and children so firmly into a common union sealed by love. Pleasures, riches, comforts and successes may be added to a man's life, and his career may remove him thousands of miles away from his home; yet, nothing can ever completely eradicate his affection for his old home. Home remains forever home, no matter what it is like. No life experience changes that. Wherever he goes he will discover reminders of home, and whatever he sees causes him to yearn for home until he just must go home.

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam
Be it ever so humble there's no place like home!
A charm from the skies seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world, is ne'er met with elsewhere."

The deepest and strongest memories of life are connected with the homes of our childhood and youth. I would not take any amount of money for the memories of my childhood home. The things which my parents taught me there are worth more to me than anything else I have learned. In future years, when our children look back to the days of their childhood, will they be able to thank God for the homes we gave them? May God grant it! Our homes ought to be dedicated to God.

We have considered the subject of BUILDING A HAPPY HOME from the period of early friendships through the time when parents have children old enough to leave at home or to be married. At this stage when these parents are too old for rock and roll and too young for Geritol, some of them are desperate to have one more fling. In their attempt to do so they generally make

spectacles of themselves and leave scars on some family or families. In most cases time usually brings them to their senses, and at last they settle down to face life more seriously. Illustration--skates.

A great many people, even in their earlier years, look forward to old age with misgivings and sometimes with fear. Old age is very generally dreaded as the time of the tired heart, the palsied hand and long, weary waiting. So it may well be, if it is not in Christ. In Christ it is not a descent, but a glorious ascent. Some one asked an old man who had the right sort of faith, "You are on the shady side of seventy, I suppose?" "No," he replied, "I am on the sunny side, for I am on the side nearest to glory." Browning was right when he wrote:

"Grow old alone with me,
The best is yet to be;
The last of life for which the first was made."

A truly Christian old age is a blessing to the world. Those who are truly living in Christ have extracted the honey out of the ripe experiences of life and know how to say the right word and do the right deed in season.

"It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light," (Zechariah 14:7). This is a word painting of an ideal old age. The world holds no experience finer than that which a happy married life offers. In youth two have lived clean lives. They have been attracted to each other. After a delightful courtship they plighted their love in high honor, married and established their home. They have passed along life's road in happy companionship; children have come and have been reared to go forth and do a piece of the world's good work and establish homes of their own which, in turn, become centers of blessing; and now the two older folks serving God and their fellowmen, happy in the love of each other, in the joy of their children and friends, move on toward the twilight and evening star, waiting till over the western hills the evening bell sounds one clear call for them. It has come to pass that for them at evening time it is light.

This is a picture that young people should set before themselves early in life, for it is a reality that does not come by chance. The colors for this picture are not gathered quickly, but they are prepared by definite plans, honest living, genuine love and the guidance of God. Such an old age is worth paying for.

This period in life can be so barren and lonely, so filled with querulousness and heartache, or it can be filled with so much that is fine. If the two have learned to trust each other and have learned by the grace of the Master's spirit to leave behind them their misunderstandings and the things that mar the day's task, they can keep these assets to aid them far on into a mellowed and ripe old age. There are certain things that will aid greatly in making the later years of life rich and fine instead of otherwise.

1. Learn to appreciate and develop the resources of each other.
What a pathetic thing it is to find men and women who so enthusiastically appreciate the company of others outside the home but seem almost oblivious to the resources and attractiveness of their own folks.
2. Learn to build up mutual interests.
If they have learned to both love good books, to be interested in the same type of things, to have mutual friends, to feature the things which make each other happy, they have learned some of the finest pastimes for the older years.

3. Maintain the gentle arts known only to lovers. These do not need to diminish with advancing years. They should rise to more sacred heights than ever before.
4. Cultivate the ties that bind. If they have been mutually interested in some service that they have rendered and can render for the Lord, they have a source of abiding interest and fascination for the waning years. The church in which they have worshipped, some institution which they have helped to support, a cause they have sacrificed to further, will offer such a focus of interest. When two have built up a spiritual faith in a good Father who "will not leave them nor forsake them" but will guide them on and on and, even though separated for a time, bring them eternally together in His presence, then old age loses its terrors and eternal peace broods over the older years of life. God wants us to have the home we planned for, and the one He wishes for us is better than we can dream.

Some temptations that come to those who grow older are: fear, suspicion, prejudice, fussiness, infallibility, cantankerousness, impatience, interference, untidiness, vanity, brusqueness, regrets and pessimism. These make old age unhappy and unattractive.

There is but one happy or graceful approach to old age, and that is the Christian way. There is nothing more tragic than a godless old age. Perhaps those who approach old age fear most of all an old age of poverty and dependence on others. To those Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." Our heavenly Father who cares for His birds and flowers will certainly care for His children.

Another problem that looms for those facing life's sunset is that they find themselves slowing down. One of these days they will have to give up their life work and be put on the shelf. That is why all of us should cultivate the spirit of John the Baptist as expressed in his statement concerning Christ, "He must increase, but I must decrease." If we wish to grow old gracefully, we must be willing to transfer larger responsibilities of life to younger shoulders. We must be willing to take smaller places while they take the larger ones. This is a difficult thing to do, but it is the Christian way. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psalm 92: 12-14). Continue to bear fruit to the very end of life.

Another problem that dismays some older people is that they are aware of the fact that they are face to face with eternity. The Christian way is found in these words, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

If you would have roses in December, in the spring and summer time of your life you must:

1. Fill your memory with good things.
2. Speak many kind words and perform many kind deeds.
3. Spend much time in worship.

4. Spend much time in Bible study.
5. Manifest great love and render faithful service.