



Stay the Course

By Rick Shrader

As seniors and elders, we have seen a lot in our life-time. We remember the earlier days of prophetic preaching when we were encouraged to keep looking up because the days were so evil. Now we look at what's happening in this generation and we wonder what the preachers of that day would have thought if they could see what we see. Just this week a church member who works on a public school bus route told of a little boy, a long-time rider, who all of a sudden got on the bus dressed as a girl because he is being taught that's his decision. She also told of entering a new elementary school building that has been completed without boys and girls restrooms, only common restrooms. It certainly is a new day.

It is no wonder that the Pew Research Center reports that 13% of teens today suffer from some form of depression, a 59% increase in the last ten years, and the percentage is higher among girls ("American Teens Facing Depression" accessed 5/23/21). It is hard for us to imagine what pressure these terrible policies bring upon young people. But when human beings are denying that their Creator created them correctly, the soul cannot be at rest.

What is an older generation supposed to do? Some say become their friends; some say keep communication open; some say quit bragging about your old age. I think there is some truth in these kinds of concerns. But I also think that seniors have a more vital role to play before children and grandchildren—that is to be seniors! We need to stay the course as we have understood from God's Word. "That the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise" (Titus 2:2-3). Just because we are now older, "we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor 4:16). Seniors look at their children and say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Cor 12:15). Also, the older generation "shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the LORD is upright" (Psa 92:14-15).

We realize that some things have to change and some things that shouldn't change will change anyway. But change isn't the cure-all for a culture gone off the rails. The fast moving, younger generation likes to say that a rolling stone gathers no moss. But, like G.K. Chesterton observed, "The rolling stone rolls echoing from rock to rock; but the rolling stone is dead. The moss is silent because the moss is alive" (G.K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, p. 23). It is our quiet but strong conviction that speaks loudly.

I am saying that the younger generation needs us, but they need us to be seniors, elders as the Bible describes them. There are a number of reasons why elders are good for the younger generation. John said that the fathers are the ones who have known God Who is from the beginning (1 John 2:13). To us, substance should still be better than symbolism. The woke culture is all about redefinition. We should know that quality is better than quantity. We have seen too much come in the front door only to go out the back door. If they had been of us they would have stayed with us. We are seeing all around us that conservatism is better than compromise. The slippery slope always goes down, not up. And may I add, if you will bear with me, legalism is better than license. I don't mean true legalism, the kind that replaces grace with works, but what is called legalism by those who only want license for their own selfish gains. The separated life will never be attractive to the world but it is pleasing to God.

I have performed dozens and dozens of funerals for godly older saints. Grandpa and Grandma, I can tell you that when you die, the eulogies that your children and grandchildren will write and say about you will be about how you practiced these traditional Christian virtues in front of them all of your life. Their eyes will fill with tears and their hearts will burn with regret when they remember you. This is why the senior years of our lives may be the most important of all, because many other lives hang in the balance. So stay the course, press toward the mark. This generation needs us to be exactly what we are.