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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT LIFE

I have been on my front porch again, giving thought to things that matter, at least to me. Some additional thoughts have come to mind.

Thoughts about the church. I give a lot of thoughts to the church and for good reason. It has been my life for over half a century. Those of you who read my stuff know that I can, and often am, critical of the church and some of the things it does. Since the church is made up of people, and people make mistakes, some of them just ought not to be made.

But the church is not just about doing what some of us think is right. The Lord, according to His eternal purpose, established the church. (Ephesians 3:11). It is about doing His will. It is His church. He is the head of it. (Colossians 1:18) It is by His will and authority that things are done. If there is not a “thus saith the Lord,” there is no authority for us to do it.

What do you think this world would look like without the Lord’s church? I for one, don’t think I would want to live in it. While the church has its problems and flaws, much, much good has been and is being done in the world by the church and because of it.

Souls are saved. People have a sense of belonging. We have a relationship with God and His people that surpass all others. I have a relationship with brothers and sisters in Christ that is stronger than some relationships I have with my own brothers and sisters in the flesh. There is fellowship with other people of like mind. The hungry is being fed, folks are encouraged, souls are strengthened and sustained by the bonds we have in Christ.

I sometimes am concerned about the church and it's direction. Because there are people in the church that are not as concerned with scripture as I think they should be. I think they are not careful thinkers where the church is concerned. But there are passages in scripture that gives me hope for the eventual salvation of the church.

One of those is in the first chapter of Isaiah. God, through Isaiah is telling Israel the things they have done wrong and the eventual outcome of their wrong doing. In verse 9 he said, "Except Jehovah of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Because of their misdeeds they were to be taken into captivity by Babylon, but there would be a remnant left on which to rebuild the nation.

I fear the church will see the "dark ages" again. But with all that concern I have an abiding faith that God will see His church through. Down through the ages, the church has fallen victim to false teachers, charlatans and the greedy. But today it is strong, vibrant and alive because the Lord eventually has control. No man or group of men has greater strength than He.

Elders. God bless 'em. They have my gratitude, my support and my prayers. I think there is perhaps a no more thankless job than being an elder. Not all are cut out for the work, and it is a work. (1 Timothy 3:1) It takes dedication, knowledge particularly of the scriptures, time, effort and prayer, to be an elder. It also takes understanding, sensitivity and courage to be an elder. I have seen my share of the unqualified but thankfully I have seen some good ones as well.

A church will never exceed the leadership of that church. Therefore it is important, and necessary, that men chosen for the work be good men. The reason Paul set forth those qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is because it is not a work for the faint of heart. Without their stalwart adherence to the scriptures, the church would be in a world of hurt.

Elders do not always make the "right" decisions, or at least the decisions we would make. But it is the responsibility THEY have been given, not us. The authority elders have is from the word of God and only from the word of God. As long as they adhere to it, and demand nothing of us that goes against the teaching of that word, we are to submit to them. They spend

countless hours of which most members do not know, dealing with the church, its direction, its problems and its people. They agonize over those who leave for the world, those who are in trouble in their families and those whose interest is not what it should be. Again I say, "God bless 'em."

The church today is suffering from a lack of men who are mature that have an interest in serving. Sometime I will devote more time to this. Recently a church of some 400 people announced they would be looking to appoint new elders. In going through the process only one was found who filled the bill. To me, it is such a shame that an old, established church, would only have one man of that number who had prepared himself to serve as an elder. Something needs to change to remedy this.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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