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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

THOUGHTS ABOUT LIFE

I don't know how many of you have fished from the bank of a creek but some of you have. They tell me it is a good place to commune with nature and with God, whether you like fishing or not.

I fished that way as a boy but I am not sure that I had any idea of communing with either nature or God. I just wanted to catch some fish, and never did catch many. Two of my brothers, one older and one younger, and I used to go fishing. They seemed to catch them but I never could. I tried fishing a few times when I became an adult but couldn't catch them then either.

Today, I sit on my porch quite a bit to do my thinking. No, there is no fishing pole but I get a lot of thinking done that way. Here are some things I think about.

I think about life. I have lived a few years past "three score and ten" so there is quite a bit to think about. The first thing that comes to my mind is that I have been so abundantly blessed. No, I haven't made a lot of money; in fact, by most standards I would be considered poor. There is nothing new about that. I was raised that way. But I have had blessings in my life that I could never have imagined would happen to me. They also could never be reckoned by their monetary value.

One of the greatest blessings has been that I have been able to preach. As a youngster growing up I admired men who preached. I never thought I would be able to do that but those who could "stand and deliver" fired my imagination. I have preached all the way from an old two-room schoolhouse in Arkansas to the fastest growing church in Oklahoma. I have loved every minute of it.

Oh there have been problems and disappointments and heartache along the way, but that is a part of every life. Looking back on it, I would not have traded it for the world. I made my first talk when I was 17, preached my first sermon when I was 18 and have been trying to do it ever since. I have done other things along the way, but nothing compares to my experience of preaching the gospel.

I have two sons, both now in their 50's of whom I am very proud. They are both industrious, hard working men that have never been on welfare one day. I have seen them grow into responsible men who take life seriously and think I may have had a little to do with that. I could tell you a lot of stories about their "growing up" years, but they probably would not appreciate it. But I love them more than I can say. We lost their sister a few years back, way too soon, at age 47, and we miss her terribly. I always thank God for my children.

I have some of the most outstanding friends in the world. My late, great friend Foy L. Smith, used to tell people I was his "best preacher friend." As time passed, I understood what he meant. I have some mighty good friends who are preachers and I am close to them. Preachers have things in common not found in others. How I appreciate and depend on them!

Then I have some powerfully good friends who are not preachers. Some of them are elders in the church. I have always had good friends who are elders but these I have seen grow and develop into the material God would have lead his church. Their friendship and help along the way have enriched my life immeasurably. I thank God for my friends.

I also think about death. Some folks don't like to think about death but that is kind of foolish, seeing that we are all going to go through that someday. Perhaps I think about it a little more lately because I am approaching "old age" and because I have also had some very good friends to die these last few years. I visited a supporting church a few years back where I was supposed to speak. One of the ladies came to me and said, "Just don't talk about death." Seems like their preacher had been talking about it quite a bit as of late.

I have never liked funerals although I have conducted quite a few. It is one of those "necessities" of life. But the passing of some close friends has

saddened me. It seems we have lost quite a few of our outstanding preachers lately and that saddens me. When I think about who will take their place, I wonder if older preachers years ago had the same thoughts.

I realize that few will remember anything I have done here that really matters that much. Our rewards will not be what or who remembers us. It will be between God and us. The same passage that tells it is “appointed unto men once to die,” also tells us, “after this cometh the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27) The Bible also tells us, “For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:14) Now that is a sobering thought!

But there is one thing that I fail to understand about Christians and their attitude toward death. I know people who have been faithful Christians for many, many years and still they are “scared to death” of dying. Somehow they have not received the message. Christians are “going home” when we leave this world. Remember John’s words? “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:3-4) Ah, what comfort!

There are a quite a few other things I think about as well. Perhaps at another time, the Lord willing, I will share those also.

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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