

THE TRENTON BULLETIN

The Dangers Of Having Been Here Longer (Gary Henry)

"Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more" (Ecclesiastes 4:13).

JUST AS THERE ARE SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR THOSE WHO ARE YOUNG IN THE FAITH, THERE ARE ALSO SOME FOR THE OLDER. One of these is the pride that comes from comparing ourselves to those who are our juniors, spiritually speaking. "May God help us to avoid thoughts such as these: but I have been here the longest. I have worked harder. Someone else is being favored" (Teresa of Ávila).

Pride is especially dangerous because of its subtlety. It can take many different forms, some of which are extremely hard to see when we are the ones who are guilty. If we think only of blatant egotism and arrogance, we may judge ourselves to be free of pride, but we need to think twice. It may be that some of the attitudes we classify as "spiritual maturity" are actually forms of pride, nicely disguised as the virtues of strength and wisdom.

For example, it's hard for experienced Christians to keep satisfaction with their experience from sliding off into the swamp of smugness. Perhaps we would never say so, and perhaps we're clever enough to keep others from knowing we think this way, but inwardly, we may feel a warm, condescending glow of ever-so-subtle superiority when we think how little others have suffered. "When they've been around as long as we have, they'll see things differently," we sigh, congratulating ourselves for being older.

If you think you're not troubled by this particular malady, ask yourself this question: how willing am I to be corrected by someone with far less experience than I? The patronizing, "mature" smile with which you listen to criticism from your juniors is probably a sign of pride, and you may need to listen to Solomon: "Better a poor and wise youth than an

old and foolish king who will be admonished no more." Hasn't pride closed many an older ear?

Whether we're young or old in the faith, it's a good idea to minimize the amount of time we spend making comparisons. It really doesn't matter whether we are ahead of or behind someone else in life's experience. We won't have been in heaven for five seconds before we realize how absolutely silly such comparisons were while we lived in this world.

"Beware of thinking about your seniority" (Teresa of Ávila).



No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

(1 Corinthians 10:13)

Self-Government (Preachers Commentary)

A friend once asked an aged man what caused him so often to complain of pain and weariness in the evening. "Alas!" said he, "I have every day so much to do; for I have two falcons to tame, two hares to keep from running away, two hawks to manage, a serpent to confine, a lion to chain, and a sick man to tend and wait upon."

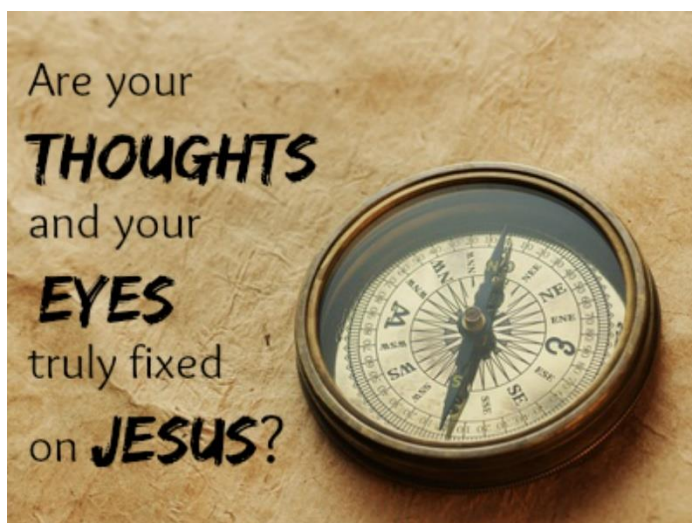
"Why, you must be joking," said his friend; "surely no man can have all these things to do at once."

"Indeed, I am not joking," said the old man; "but what I have told you is the sad and sober truth; for the two falcons are my two eyes, which I must diligently guard, lest something should please them which may be hurtful to my salvation; the two hares are my feet, which I must hold back lest they should run after evil objects, and walk in the ways of sin; the two hawks are my two hands, which I must train and keep to work in order that I may be able to provide for myself and for my brethren who are in need; the serpent is my tongue, which I must always keep in with a bridle, lest it should speak anything unseemly; the lion is my heart, with which I have to maintain a continual fight in order that vanity and pride may not fill it, but that the grace of God may dwell and work there; the sick man is my whole body, which is always needing my watchfulness and care. All this daily wears out my strength.

God Is Getting Better At it (Selected)

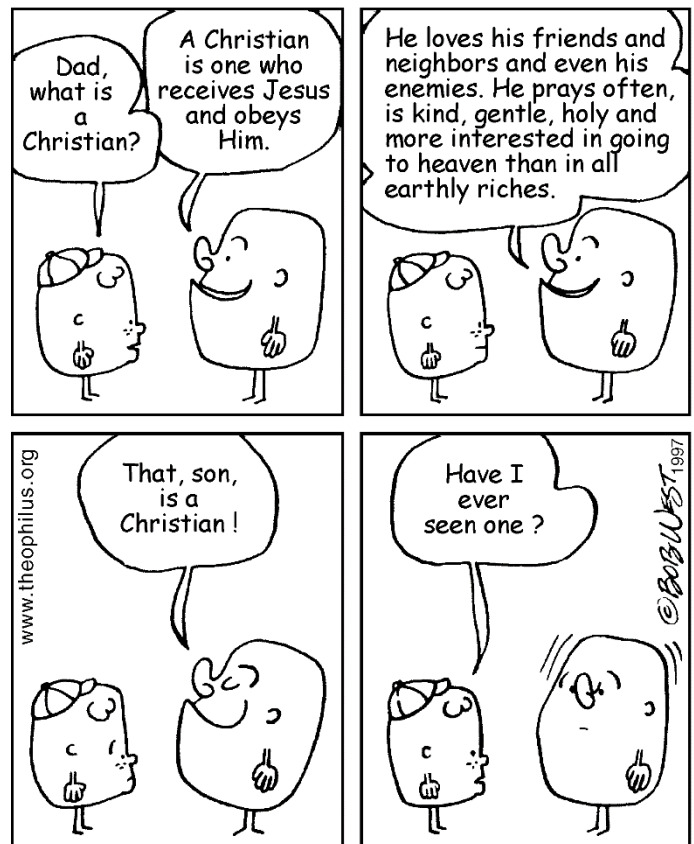
A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would take her eyes off the book and reach up to touch his wrinkled cheek. She was alternately stroking her own cheek, then his again.

Finally, she spoke up, "Grandpa, did God make you?" "Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago." "Oh," she paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?" "Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago." Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"



THEOPHILUS

A Rare Breed



The Christian hope is the hope which has seen everything and endured everything and has still not despaired because it believes in God. The Christian hope is not hope in the human spirit, in human goodness, in human endurance, in human achievement; the Christian hope is hope in the power of God. (William Barclay)

New Year Promises

Promise to be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

Promise to look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.

Promise to forget past mistakes and press on to greater achievements in the future.

Promise to give so much effort to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

Promise to find a deeper relationship with God, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.