

God Provides in Old Age

Some people are able to carry out their stewardship over the things God has given them to the very end of their lives. Their health continues, their mind stays strong, and they are able to leave to their children resources that will serve as an extension of God's provision even after they are gone. For some of us, however, age, health, and the decay of the mind may lead to a stage in old age when our choices once again are limited. Jesus told Peter, **"when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish"** (John 21:18b). What Jesus said to Peter in reference to the manner of his death (John 21:19), becomes true

for many as age returns us to a state of dependency. Others may have to care for us, tell us where to live, dress us, clean us, and provide for us when (as in childhood) we cannot provide for ourselves.

Whatever our condition in old age, for all who live it is only for a few short years of our life that we are given a stewardship. We are never truly masters of our lives. We have the responsibility to act as vehicles of God's provision to others. If we become disillusioned with God because others have failed in their stewardship, or consider it unfair that those we love have too quickly lost their ability to care for themselves, we may have misinterpreted this brief period of responsibility as if we were intended to be autonomous creatures in no need of God's provision. That is not who we are, or ever will be! At every stage of life God is always behind the scenes offering the provisions necessary for our life here ultimately pointing us toward eternal life when He provides for those who seek Him. God's provision doesn't mean that we always get everything we want, or that we will be delivered from every trial. The ultimate focus of all of God's provision, and the highest provision He desires to offer to us lies in the age to come. Eternal life is the final stage for the child of God and the greatest demonstration of God's eternal provision (cf. Rev. 21:4-5). Obedience to the gospel demonstrates a trust in God to provide for us through every stage of life.



Faithful Sayings Issue 23.26 June 27, 2021

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ISSUE

23.26

June 27, 2021

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

God Provides throughout Life

By Kyle Pope

I am blessed to be the grandfather (or "Pa Pa") to six beautiful children. There's a special bond we have to our children's children. Solomon said, **"Children's children are the crown of old men"** (Prov. 17:6a, NKJV). With each grandchild I have been amazed to experience the instant connection I could feel toward these tiny little souls from the moment I first saw them. Yet what is even more amazing is what childbirth illustrates about God's providential care for His people.

Before my grandchildren were even born, they could have no idea all of the care, planning, and preparation that went into their entrance into the world. There were special diets their mothers adopted to guard their health. There were showers that were hosted to offer clothing and provisions for their future care. The rooms where they would sleep and play were painted and carefully furnished. When they were about to be born, the lives of parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles instantly froze for a brief moment as miles were traveled, plans were rearranged, responsibilities were transferred in order to welcome these precious souls into the world. In their first hours, they will never know all of the doctors, nurses, midwives, and staff who each contributed to the first moments of their lives. When they came home, it was amazing to see the efforts of their mothers and fathers to attend to their every need, while they (oblivious to all of this) began their discovery of the world. They didn't need to feel anxiety over food, shelter, clothing, or security—every need was provided for them, even though they had

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
10:00 AM
11:00 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Kevin Wise
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

no concept of the source of such provision nor the power to secure it for themselves.

God Provides in Birth

On a much broader scale the provision offered to my grandchildren illustrates some amazing principles about God's providence. God told Jeremiah, **"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you"** (Jer. 1:5a). This was not only true for Jeremiah because of the plans God had for him (cf. Jer. 1:5b)—it is true for all of us. David said of God, **"You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb"** (Psa. 139:13) and **"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed"** (Psa. 139:16a). Not a one of us who has ever lived had the slightest power, knowledge, or ability to mold the DNA, chromosomes, and cells that developed into the

marvel that brought about our own existence. Before we were born, the mind of God was making provision for our conception and future life. The freewill actions of our parents certainly played a role in this process, but God provided all of the building blocks from which our entire make-up was constructed. God set the rules and laws of nature that govern this process, and He sustains imperceptibly all of the conditions and reactions that allow its continuation. Paul said of Jesus, **"in Him all things consist"** (Col. 1:17) and the Hebrew writer speaks of Him **"upholding all things by the word of His power"** (Heb. 1:3). When men lose faith and imagine that there is no God responsible for our lives how easy it is to ignore these facts. In ways far more fundamental to our existence than baby showers and room decorations, God lies behind every breath we take, every sensation our brain processes, and the continuing life and death of every cell in our body.

God Provides through Marriage and the Family

The reasons we lose sight of this may be many; however, at the heart of some of these problems is a failure to distinguish stewardship from mastery, or (to put it another way) responsibility from autonomy. From the first stages of our life when we have no ability whatsoever to determine even the smallest choices about our existence, we gradually are allowed to assume more and more responsibilities (for a time). It starts with choices like, "What would you like for dinner?" or "What toys do you want to play with today?" These choices eventually expand into questions such as "Where do you plan to go to college?"—"What job will you choose?" or "Who will you marry?" At that stage of life it is very

easy to imagine that we are in charge and it's all up to us! That is an illusion! We are just as dependant upon God's provision during the few short years during which we have a measure of responsibility, as are we were in our birth. We are not masters; we are stewards.

Let's consider how this works. As God would have it, in birth we are placed in the care of parents who are charged to make the freewill choices to bring us up **"in the training and admonition of the Lord"** (Eph. 6:4). They are to **"train"** us in the **"way"** we should go so that in older age, we will not **"depart from it"** (Prov. 22:6). This very arrangement and charge is part of the way God provides. Our parents have a stewardship to fulfill. As we grow we become capable of working for a living and may become responsible for our own families. Is God out of the picture during this stage? No. It is God **"who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food"** (2 Cor. 9:10). To mankind, it is God who has **"given him power to eat... to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor"** (Ecc. 5:19). All the materials necessary for industry, economy, and commerce that allow us to provide an income—all of the mental and physical capabilities that allow us to work are given by God. This too is part of the way God provides. We have responsibility, but we are never autonomous and wholly independent.

Clearly, some parents neglect, ignore, or reject this responsibility. In some cases, circumstances may hinder parents or other family members from fulfilling their stewardship. This is where the entire question of the government's role becomes an issue. According to Scripture, government is charged to punish wrongdoing (Rom. 13:3-4), but it is not charged to train or bring up children. The church is charged to aid its own who cannot provide for themselves (1 Tim. 5:9-16), and individual Christians **"as we have opportunity"** are to **"do good to all"** (Gal. 6:10), but even in these cases the primary vehicle of God's provision is the family. Paul taught, **"if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has**

denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8). It is when man fails, or one has no connection to the Lord's church, that government so often is left to bridge the gap. Unfortunately a "safety net" may quickly become a "meal ticket," and systems born out of charitable intentions can evolve into tools of political manipulation. Yet, whether Christians find themselves under a free market, capitalistic democracy or under the most totalitarian socialistic state imaginable we must never surrender to the government the responsibility God has given us to be His stewards unto our families. This may look different in different cultures and at different times. The medieval serf may have been wholly dependent upon his feudal lord. The sharecropper may have been virtually enslaved to the landowner whose property he farmed. In such cases, God's provision may flow through those in positions over us, whether they are landowners, masters, or socialistic governments that funnel provision through the state. Christians can be Christians anywhere, and God can provide through many sources.



Olsen Park Church of Christ