

Life's Passages

John R. Gavazzoni

Each of our natural life-passages gives way to the next. Often, upon entering one season, a person finds himself almost immediately projecting into the next, as a "little boy" wishing he could hasten becoming a "big boy," who, as soon as he begins to think of himself as a big boy, he yearns to be one of the even bigger boys, so that he'll look like, and be able to do those things he admires. I remember as an early teen watching my cousin, four years my senior, tossing a football with some friends, and noticing that Larry had clearly begun to develop the musculature of an older teen.

I remember being so impressed by the difference between his muscle tone and mine. His biceps had definition, and his forearms had that sinewy look that I so admired. My physique, by comparison was still boyish.

That contributed to, I'm sure, several years later, deciding to respond to an ad for a beginner's set of "weights" for body building. It worked, and shortly, as I would check myself in my bedroom mirror, I began to see the results from many hours of laborious presses, curls, bench presses, squats and other weight-resistance moves.

I sent away for additional heavier plates to increasingly challenge my growing strength.

Flash forward: In the season of my 30's and 40's, I would find myself getting out of shape, but still able to recover by mostly a regimen of push-ups. Then came the shocker when having reached pre-old age, and deciding it was time to begin a regimen of push-ups again adding more each week to finally, as I had done before, reach the goal of being able to do 50 consecutively---well past the half-way point in my schedule, suddenly my right shoulder protested the challenge I was presenting it without sufficient recovery time, by the searing pain of a muscle tear that took years to heal during which push-ups were to be an absolute no-no.

There's that stage when we become aware that advancing age is no longer accompanied by an increase of ability, but rather the reverse, and we definitely are no longer looking forward to the physical changes that advancing years will involve. Now, my plan, is to be

able to reach 50 push-ups again in two or three years rather than in one, and being VERY careful of the first sign that the old bod might again fail me painfully. Now I do my push-ups only every other day, and only add additional ones when clearly my aging body can handle more.

Now I've only been speaking of life's passages in physical terms as a person who has always valued being up to physical challenges. But how about our spiritual life-passages? In my recent entrance into the clearly elderly physical stage, I've been, just very recently, amazed at how clearly I've sensed a conviction that I should prepare for that stage when I'll be working in the kingdom of God from, as we say, "the other side." I don't remember ever having such a deep conviction that I should give my most serious attention to being prepared for that up-coming major transition.

That conviction fits in with the growing awareness of the universality of the body of Christ; universal, not only in the spacial sense, but universal in the sense that includes our essential oneness that transcends space, time, and death, and the seeming separation of "this side," and the "other side" of life. I need to be prepared for my next stage of the unfolding of my responsibilities as a son of God working with all my brethren on both sides.

As an aside, let me say that there is a mistaken perception that sonship and servanthood are mutually exclusive, that we ought not to think of ourselves as bond-slaves of Jesus Christ if we have a mature understanding of sonship. In fact, that perception, itself, reveals not only an immature understanding, but also a seriously skewered one.

I've been feeling afresh the presence of my Lord moving in close and getting very personal with me. I'm becoming keenly aware of how much there is in me that needs soul-healing. There is an irritability, and even anger in my flesh, directed toward certain things, situations, and people that is not really about them. The irritability and anger is really about resenting what my Lord has often chosen to put me through.

With that awareness, the Holy Spirit's insistent note that I abandon all hope of helping God to actualize my completeness in Christ is sounding clearer and clearer every day.

It would seem to follow that if there was a season in the apostle Paul's life when it was more expedient for him to remain "on this side" that there came the time when it was more expedient for him to "cross over," more expedient for the sake of the body of Christ, that is.

I recently felt the strong impression from the Spirit regarding a certain religious endeavor. My sense of His voice was: "Don't go there, it will be a waste; the results of the efforts being spent will not abide the fire of my holiness. There are so many grand appearing projects that will finally be exposed as merely men's ideas of what needs to be done. Remember, only participation in the singular life of my Son has any spiritual worth. Only He pleases me. Only what He does through you is true kingdom stuff, for He only does those things that He sees Me do."

Lord, I want to build with gold, silver, and precious stones. I see so much about me that is of the wood, hay, and stubble counterfeit of your building. Deliver me from personal kingdom-building. With all my brethren, bring me into the wholeness that is ours in Christ.