

Growing Older

No. 197

Introduction.

I. In the 90th psalm Moses said. (Psa. 90:10, 12).

A. It appears that the life span in the time of Moses was about 70 to 80 years. In the days of the Roman empire the average life span dropped to 30 and those who lived to be 50, 60, or even 70 were the exceptions. In the last 50 years, due to scientific advancements and better nutrition the life expectancy of man has greatly increased. The average man lives to be about 73 and the average woman lives to be about 79. Many people are living to be 70, 80, or even 90 years of age. Millions of our citizens are over 65 and the number is rapidly increasing every year. The present, as well as the future, is a time of "older people."

B. Since the life span of man is being extended, it behooves us to learn how to make these latter years useful and happy ones.

1. **Robert Browning** expressed faith in these years when he wrote in "Rabbi Ben Esra."

"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, The last of life, for which the first was made:	Our times are in His hand Who saith, 'A whole I planned. Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"
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2. **Robert Browning** wrote in another place:

"An age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead."

3. **Another** write states:

"For what is age but youth's full bloom,
A riper, more transcendent youth?
A weight of gold is never old."

4. **Nora Johnson**, a lady 88 years young, wrote these meaningful words:

You tell me I am getting old: I tell you that's not so! The house I live in is worn out- And that, of course, I know. It's been in use a long, long time while, It's weathered many a gale; I'm really not surprised you think It's getting somewhat frail.	My few short years can't make me old - I feel I'm in my youth; Eternity lies just ahead, And life and joy and trust. I'm going to live forever there; Life will go on - it's grand! You tell me I'm getting old? You just don't understand.
The color's changing on the roof, The window's getting dim, The wall's a bit transparent, And looking rather thin. The foundation's not so steady As once it use to be; My "house" is getting shaky. But my "house" isn't me!	The dweller in my little "house" Is young and bright and gay - Just starting on a life to last Throughout eternal day. You only see the outside, Which is all that most folks see. You tell me I'm getting old? You've mixed my house with me!

II. Let's now consider some things that will make the last years happy and useful.

- A. Someone has said, “Most men spend the first half of their lives making the second half miserable.”
- B. We want to study some things that will enable us to grow old gracefully and have a beautiful, abundant life.

I. **Give More Respect To Older Ones** - In the first place, it is important that we give more respect to older people.

- A. It is very tragic and lamentable that our nation is one of the few nations on earth where the aged are not honored. In Europe and in most of the other countries of the world elderly people are put on a pedestal and honored. In American we honor youth and tell a man he is through at 65 and try to put him or her on a shelf. This should not be. We need more respect for older people. They are needed in the world and have contributed much to the world.
- B. If you check your history books very carefully, you will find that more than half of the world’s great accomplishments have come from people over 60 years of age.
 1. **Moses** was 80 years old when God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.
 2. His spokesman, his brother Aaron was 83.
 3. **Vanderbilt** added about 100 million dollars to his fortune between the ages of 70 and 88.
 4. **Tennyson** wrote “Crossing The Bar” at the age of 83.
 5. The astronomer **Galileo** was 73 when he made some of his greatest discoveries.
 6. Many of our **great presidents and statesmen** have been over 60 years of age.
 7. Older people are **not useless parasites**, as some would have us to believe, but are vital to our world!
 8. We need to let older people know they are loved and appreciated and needed.

II. **Must Not Quit Living** - In the second place, older people must not quit living.

- A. Too many older folks begin almost every sentence “When I was young” and live in the past. As we grow older it is important that we don’t lose our spirit of zest and humor. Age is not the years one has been on the earth, but a state of mind. A man who stops dreaming, loses his ambition and sense of humor is old. A person who retains these things is not old, but is full of life.
- B. It is **tragic** for an older person to act and dress like he is 20 just as it is tragic to see a young person act like he is old. A person should be proud of his age. There is nothing more beautiful in the world than a person who has grown old serving Christ. (Prov. 16:31).
- C. Someone has written:

Let me grow lovely, growing older— So many fine things do; Laces, and ivory, and gold, And silks need not be new.	And there is healing in old trees, Old streets a glamor hold: Why may not I, as well as these, Grow lovely, growing old. —Karle Baker
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III. **Draw Near To God And Christ** - In the third place, it is vital older people draw near to God and Christ.

- A. Older people often suffer diminished strength and sometimes even have “senior moments,” but this does not hinder them from drawing closer to God and Christ.
- B. Drawing closer to God and Christ keeps older Christians **from feeling lonely**. (Matt. 28:20).
- C. Drawing closer to God and Christ gives the Christian **great confidence and inner strength**. (Psa. 46:1; Phil

4:13).

- D. Drawing closer to God and Christ gives the older Christian **great determination to make the most of the time** remaining for the Lord and His great cause. (Eph. 5:15, 16).
- E. Drawing closer to God and Christ will inspired the younger generation to **remain true** to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the church. They will exclaim, “I want to grow old in Christ and enjoy the peace and power and love and joy that has made you sweet and faithful and courageous rather than one who is sour and unfaithful and fearful and miserable.

IV. Make Ourselves Useful In The Church - In the third place, it is important that we make ourselves useful in the church.

A. Many older Christians feels there is nothing useful they can do any more and retire from the army of the Lord, but this is not so.

- 1. Can you imagine Paul saying, “I’m too old to work in the Lord’s army?”
- 2. Can you imagine the beloved apostle John neglecting to teach a class or visit a prospect because he was “too old or retired?” From all evidence we have, John was still actively engaged in the Lord’s work until he was past 90.
- 3. Neither should a person ever get the idea that he or she is too old to render service to God.

B. The church needs the wisdom and talent of its older members.

- 1. God has designed that the older men in the faith be the elders or overseers of the flock.
- 2. Paul instructed the older women to teach the younger women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be soberminded, chaste, workers at home.” Who is better qualified to do this than an older Christian woman?
- 3. Older people can also visit the sick and spiritually weak. They can do personal work. A good percentage of those who go on the campaigns for Christ throughout the world are over 60 years of age.
- 4. There are older Christian in this congregation and in most congregations who work untiringly for the Lord. This is wonderful and the way all older Christians should be.
- 5. **The Lord said.** (Rev. 2:10).
 - a. He did not say that he who remains faithful until he is 60 or 65 or 70 shall receives anything.
 - b. There is no time for retirement in the Lord’s army! (Lk. 9:62).
 - c. Let all of us, even the oldest of us, work for the Lord as long as there is strength and breath in our bodies.
 - d. Let us live in such a way that we can say as Paul did near the end of his life. (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Conclusion.

I. The late L.R. Wilson wrote these words about growing older.

“No one likes to feel that he is growing old. Yet we all have to admit it, if we stick around for a time. But

growing old can be a wonderful experience, if we are willing to make it such. People admire the hoary heads and rich experiences of those whose hearts are light and whose spirits are sweet and mellow.

As long as health, vigor and good fortune smile upon us we should make the most of them. But when we have had our day, and the shadows lengthen toward the East, we should accept whatever life may yet have to offer and be ready to bow to the inevitable when the times comes for us. God's plan is always best, whether we understand it or not. Who would want to stick around forever, living in the same place, traveling over the same streets, carrying on the same business, looking at the same fades, and doing the same things without end? God planned that we should have our little day upon the earth, serve our purpose, then make room for others.

However, if our existence should end in the death of our body, then we could never understand the mystery of life at all. If the vegetation of the earth comes forth to be consumed by the animal, which in turn is consumed by man, and man returns but to the earth to enrich the soil, so that it may bring forth more vegetables, to be consumed by more animals, to be consumed by more men, then no man can understand the meaning of this vicious circle. If life ends in death, then nature is a failure, life is a fraud, and God (if there be such) works without a purpose. But we have the blessed assurance that life does not end in the death of the body. Indeed not!

When we lay aside these mortal frames, then life will burst anew—in glad fruition—for all of God's people, where moving to "new fields" are unnecessary, where good-byes are never said, where friends never part, and the shadow never lengthen. Blessed thought, happy day, when that morning breaks for all of God's people! May it be a bright and happy day for all of us. In view of the fact we rapidly hastening toward the end of our days here, and toward that glad new day "over there," may our lives be such that no blemish shall ever be found upon our garments; and may no heart ever bleed, no soul ever stumble, and may no light—however dim it may be—ever be snuffed out in a weak Christian because of our carelessness or implacableness. Should the time come unexpectedly for us to turn loose of the things of this world and wing our way to realms above, may we have no occasion or reason for saying, "O, if I had only known a few hours earlier, I would have 'fixed' some matter and would have made a few things 'right' before going!" May all of us so live that the sting of death will have no terrors, and may our example ever be a source of courage and inspiration to others.

And now, may the God of peace preserve you until we shall meet in glad reunion in that bright an happy land, where joys go on forever more. —L.R. Wilson, **The Christian Home**, p. 131.

- II. "Growing Older" is a wonderful thing in Christ. May all of us gracefully faithfully grow older in Him.
- III. If you have not given your life to Christ, we invite you to do so at this time. Why not grow old in the service of Christ and then when your times comes, embark to spend eternity with God and His Son in a land where you shall never grow old? Come as we stand and sing.