

THE GLORY OF OLD AGE

Proverbs 16:31

INTRODUCTION

- The world has many theories as to the secret of a long life
- But ultimately, a long life comes only by blessing of God
- The scriptures promise longevity to those who: fear the Lord (Psalm 128:1-6); keep God's commandments (Proverbs 3:1-2); seek wisdom (Proverbs 3:16; 9:11); speak truth (1 Peter 3:10); honour their parents (Exodus 20:12)
- While God does cut short the life of some because of sin (1 Samuel 2:32; Ecclesiastes 7:17; 1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 John 5:17), God also may choose to take the righteous early to glorify himself, or to spare them from the evil to come (1 Kings 14:12-13; Isaiah 57:1-2)
- God commands us to esteem and show reverence toward the aged (Leviticus 19:32; Job 32:6; Proverbs 23:22; 1 Timothy 5:1-2)
- Wisdom *should* accompany age (Job 12:12; 32:7), yet this not always the case (Job 32:9)
- Many people live as fools and die as fools, without accumulating any wisdom
- These people have no fear of the Lord, therefore have not even the beginning of wisdom
- It is folly to disdain the wisdom of our elders, as did Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:13)
- There has always been "generation gap" – a differing of opinions between the old and young – but in modern times, the youth have developed a profound disrespect of the elderly
- In the 1960s the privileged "baby boomer" generation repudiated everything that their parents' generation stood for – their faith, politics, morals, art, etc.
- The generation of these last days are prophesied to be "disobedient to parents" and "without natural affection" (2 Timothy 3:1-3; Proverbs 30:11)
- This modern world idolises youth and despises old age

- The ancient pagan practice of senicide—the killing of the elderly—is continued today in its modern form of euthanasia
- Many churches have also adopted the idolisation of youth, transforming their worship to suit the carnal appetites and spiritual ignorance of young people, while repudiating the wisdom of preceding generations
- While the children of this world despise old age, in God’s view the grey head is an emblem of honour upon those who fear him
- For the child of God, the latter years can, and should be, a glorious period of fruitful Christian service

I. IT IS THE TIME OF RENEWED FOCUS ON THE SPIRITUAL

- A. Old age is attended with physical weakness and infirmity (Ecclesiastes 12:1-7)
 1. For those who live only for this present material world, this is devastating
 2. “The first half of life consists of the capacity to enjoy without the chance; the last half consists of the chance without the capacity.” – Mark Twain
 3. But for those who live for world to come, this condition works for their spiritual good
- B. Physical weakness promotes spiritual strength
 1. Perfect health and prosperity often promotes a attitude of pride and delusion (Psalm 30:6; 2 Chronicles 26:16; Luke 12:19)
 2. Affliction humbles us and gives us a proper view of our frailty and need of God (Psalm 119:67,71; 2 Corinthians 1:9; Daniel 4:30-37)
 3. God’s strength is perfected in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
 4. The faithful saints “out of weakness were made strong” (Hebrews 11:34)
 5. “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Ephesians 3:16)
 6. It is not to the young and vigorous, but to those who “wait upon the LORD” that are promised unwearied strength (Isaiah 40:29-31; 46:4)
- C. Old age promotes serious thoughts on death and eternity

1. Though we can die at any age, the elderly are perceived as being closer to death than the young
2. The infirmities of old age drive the believer to yearn for the next world and a new body (Philippians 1:23; 3:20-21; 2 Corinthians 5:8)
3. "The bitter must come before the sweet, and that also will make the sweet the sweeter." (Bunyan)

II. IT IS THE TIME OF REAPING OUR FORMER SOWING (Galatians 6:7-8)

- A. We sow by the choices we make in life
 1. Every day we are sowing, with our thoughts, words and deeds
- B. There must come a time of reaping
 1. The full harvest awaits the next life, yet in old age we begin to reap what was sown in youth
 2. Many are deceived, thinking they can sow to the flesh in their youth, but reap a blessed end to their lives
 3. The reaping is always of the same nature as the sowing
 4. The reaping is of a greater magnitude than the sowing
 - a. Negatively – Reuben (Genesis 35:22; 49:4)
 - b. Positively – Caleb (Numbers 13:30; Joshua 14:9-14)
 5. "The Devil has no happy old people"

III. IT IS THE TIME OF RESOLUTE FRUITFUL SERVICE (Psalm 92:12-14)

- A. The righteous shall still bring forth fruit in old age
 1. Trees generally become less fruitful as they age and decline
 2. Yet in God's economy, age is no barrier to fruitfulness
 3. God has often used aged saints to accomplish his purposes
 - a. Moses' most fruitful period of life was between 80-120 years of age
 - b. Daniel was over 80 years old when he went to the lions' den for his faithfulness to God (Daniel 6)

4. It is only those who are “planted in the house of the LORD” that are promised a fat and flourishing old age
- B. The Christian never retires from the Lord’s service
1. You may retire from your employment but not from God’s work
 2. The world encourages retirees to live selfishly, seeking pleasure in travel and recreation
 3. But the Christian retiree uses his increased free time and opportunities to labour for Christ
 4. It is the duty of the older generation to pass on their faith to the next generation
 - a. David used his old age to testify of God’s faithfulness to his people, which he knew by long experience (Psalm 37:25)
 - b. Timothy’s mother and grandmother are credited with committing their faith in God unto him (2 Timothy 1:5)
 5. The path of the just is one of continually increasing light which diminishes not until he is received into glory (Proverbs 4:18)

CONCLUSION

1. A glorious end to one’s life is conditional upon it being “found in the way of righteousness”
2. That is a life founded upon faith in Jesus Christ and devoted to his service
3. By God’s grace, the olden years can become the *golden* years of life
4. To the young, are you sowing such now, that you will have a blessed harvest later?
5. To the old, are you using your latter years in God’s service, waiting on him for strength?
6. “A life spent in the service of God and in communion with him, is the most pleasant life that anyone can live in the world.” (Matthew Henry)
7. *His work my hoary age shall bless,
When youthful vigour is no more,
And my last hour of life confess
His love hath animating pow’r.*
(Philip Doddridge)