

I look in the mirror and see
A stranger looking back at me.
Who's that person standing there
With wrinkled skin and such gray hair?
Could it be me?

The Privilege of Growing Old

Living to be old is frequently recognized as a divine blessing in the Word of God, a reward for godliness, and an indication of the favor of God to those who are faithful to His commandments.

For example, **Abraham** was promised that he would die *“in a good old age”* (Genesis 15:15) as a result of his obedience to God. Job's friend, Eliphaz said Job could *“come to his grave in a full old age”* if he would be obedient to God.

God links “length of days” with obedience to His commands: Proverbs 3:1-2:

“My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.”

This obedience begins when you are a child and continues throughout your life.

“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” **Exodus 20:12**

The author of Proverbs links a long life with wisdom.

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding...Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.”

Proverbs 3:13 & 16

“The hoary [gray hair] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.”

Proverbs 16:31

The Problems of Growing Old

Although it is a privilege to grow old, it does come with a set of problems: an aging body which is more susceptible to illness; declining strength; feelings of uselessness (especially after retirement); the loss of friends and loved ones through death; the reality of one's own death drawing nearer; loneliness; feelings of alienation from one's children and grandchildren, who are busy with other interests pursuits; and, very often, financial concerns due to dwindling income.

*Aches and pains are here to stay,
they seem to change day by day.
The list of ailments seem to grow,
as the body starts to slow.
You can't be young, weak or prissy
getting old is not for sissies.*

God warns us that old age will bring a special set of difficulties:

“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” **Psalms 90:10**

For example, Isaac had failing eyesight (Genesis 27:1) as did his son, Jacob (Genesis 48:10) and Eli (1 Samuel 3:2). Barzillai was deaf and had lost his sense of taste (2 Samuel 19:35). King David apparently had poor circulation (1 Kings 1:1-4).

Solomon graphically describes the physical deterioration that old age brings in Ecclesiastes 12:1-5: life: becomes a burden (vs.1); vision is dimmed (vs. 2); strength and vigor declines (vs. 3); teeth are lost (vs. 3); insomnia (vs. 4); fears may be magnified (vs. 5); and ambition wanes (vs. 5).

Among the most disturbing aspects of growing old is the increasing frequency of **senile dementia** as human lifespan increases. It seems eminently unfair

that people so afflicted should be robbed of their intellectual, emotional, and social vitality while their physical bodies continue to survive.

This seems to have been David's concern when he wrote Psalm 71 – a Psalm for Old Age. It begins with the prayer:

“In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. (Psalm 71:1)

Paige DeRuysche makes a great statement about the problems of old age:

“Some of us also fear growing older for physical reasons. Aging is often seen as a loss of control. Maybe our bodies aren't able to do what they once could; our memories aren't as sharp; we begin to need more help than we used to. As the years pass, our fear of the unknown may grow stronger.

But the truth is, we've never been in control anyway! From the moment we were created - whether we've realized it or not - we've relied on our Creator for every breath. Growing older helps us to shed that illusion of control more and more, and to rest in the promises of our loving God. Whether we're 9 or 90, He vows to be with us every step of the way.” -- Day Spring (August 8, 2022)

One of those precious promises of God is found in Isaiah 46:4: *“And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.”*

The Purpose of Growing Old

Job's friend, Elihu said in **Job 32:7**, *“I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.”* The assumption is that wisdom should come with old age.

This wisdom is to be shared with the next generation. Moses, for example, told the younger generation to consult with their elders (Deut.32:7).

In **Psalm 71:18**, we read, “Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.” King David saw his purpose as glorifying God through his testimony (what God had done in his life) and sharing that with the next generation (children and grandchildren).

What has God done in your life? Did He save you? How did that happen? What was the circumstances of your conversion? Do your children and grandchildren know your story?

David also said that his purpose included praise to God:

“But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof.” -- Psalm 71:14-15

While we are still alive, we have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others.

“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;”

- Psalm 92:12-14

For those who are in Christ, we know that death will bring us into the presence of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8) which is far better. But we also know that our lives are in God’s hands and if he sees fit to extend our days, we have many more days to serve Him here.

As a result, we face the same dilemma as the Apostle Paul:

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.” **Philippians 1:23-24**

Preparing for Growing Old

“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” -- Psalm 90:12

“Applying our hearts unto wisdom” involves seeking God’s counsel (prayer and Bible study) and making right decisions, such as the decision to follow Christ daily, eat healthy, take care of yourself, be faithful in church attendance, and continue to grow as a Christian.

Then we can say with the writer of Proverbs: *“My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.” -Psalm 73:26*

The time to begin for old age is now!

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;” -- Ecclesiastes 12:1

Even if you have past the “days of your youth” the time to prepare for old age is now.

We approach old age with faith not fear, because we can trust God to take care of us throughout our lives and take us to heaven when we die.

God who has cared for you in the past, will take care of you in the future:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.” (Psalm 23:6)

SO, LET’S GROW OLD GRACEFULLY!

The Truth About...

Growing Old



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