

GROWING OLDER

A news item a few years ago pointed out that Americans spend somewhere in the neighborhood of \$10 billion on beauty aids every year. A large portion of these beauty aids are designed to specifically target signs of aging. Unfortunately, our modern society glorifies youth and age is something you try to hide. A separate item pointed out that female Hollywood actors can pretty well expect to be out of a job at about age 40. Hollywood is not the only industry that ignores the talents and skills of the elderly. I once read that when Ty Cobb was 70, a reporter asked him, "What do you think you'd hit if you were playing these days?" Cobb, who was a life-time .367 hitter, said, "About .290, maybe .300." The reporter said, "That's because of the travel, the night games, the artificial turf, and all the new pitches like the slider, right?" "No," said Cobb, "it's because I'm 70." There is a certain fearful expectation of growing old. It frightens us. Perhaps that is why David prayed, "*Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth*" (Psa. 71:9). Jonathan Swift put it like this: "Every man desires to live long, but no man wants to be old." With old age comes a number of infirmities. Heath fails, the mind becomes forgetful, and our life in general slows down, either voluntarily or of necessity. How should the Christian view the aging process? And what should be our attitude toward those who have attained unto three-score years of age and beyond? When God gave Israel her law, one of the things the Almighty stressed was respect for the aged: "*Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head (gray hair), and honor the face of the old man*" (Lev. 19:32). "*The hoary head is a crown of glory; It shall be found in the way of righteousness*" (Prov. 16:31). "*The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head*" (Prov. 20:29).

When ABC's 20/20 cohost, Hugh Downs visited Nepal, he discovered it is "polite" to ask a person's age and to call someone old is a compliment. Someone in their mid fifties typically seems embarrassed about their immature age, but they are usually comforted if the inquirer

encouragingly says, "Don't feel bad, you're getting there." In Nepal they take heed to Proverbs 16:31, "*The hoary head is a crown of glory.*"

In January 2014, I made my first trip to the Philippines to preach God's word. Like their neighbor across the Indian Ocean, the Philippines have great respect for those who have reached the point in their life where there are more years behind them than before them. There are certain social benefits that go with getting older. But most of all, there seems to be a deep respect on the part those who are younger, for the older people in their society.

As we grow older there is the great danger that we consider ourselves no longer useful to the church or society. Let us never forget that Noah was six hundred years old before God called him to be the preserver of the human race. Moses was eighty before he returned to Egypt to lead Israel out of bondage. History has shown us that many an artist, poet, or composer was just reaching their apex in life in their sixties, seventies, and even their eighties or nineties. There are too many godly men and women who, upon retirement from their lifelong careers, retire from the Lord's work as well. God did not tell us to remain faithful until we retire, but "unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

We need you now more than ever. Your energy may not be what it used to be, and your thinking process may be a little slower. But, as one aptly stated, "It is true that youth is faster, but it is also true that age is more accurate." Please, do not become idle. Do not give in to the "rocking chair syndrome." The younger generation needs your wisdom to help through many of the same struggles you faced when you were younger. Meanwhile, "Thank You" for showing the way. Only eternity will reveal the good that so many of you have done in the sunset years of your life. For those who keep on keeping on in spite of your aches and pains; for those who have set an example for us in faithful attendance and godly living; for those who continue to tell others the sweet, sweet story of Jesus even if those to whom you speak think your words are the ranting of an old man or old woman. To you we express our thanksgiving. May your number increase!
—Tom Wacaster