

It Is Written

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SERVING IN MY SENIOR YEARS

By Robert Harkrider

I well remember how disappointed I was when, as a young preacher, I was told that one of our elders was "retiring" as an elder. I thought, "How could any Christian of any age ever retire?" Aren't we responsible to do like Paul, who wrote, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14)?

Although it is many years later, I continue to believe his attitude was wrong. I have begun to understand perhaps why that elder felt the need to quit. Growing old means many physical and mental changes, and in addition, some may tend to overlook the value of senior citizens. I admit that I can no longer do things that were easily accomplished a few years ago. My pace is slower as also my recall, and all the characteristics described by the writer of Ecclesiastes are becoming a reality: "those who look through the windows grow dim, and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and the mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly" (Ecclesiastes 12:3-4).

Do these changes in life mean that a senior Christian should quit serving? Is it time to "retire"? Has his work in the Lord's kingdom become of no value? Certainly not! In fact, many attributes are embellished by a life filled with righteousness. Sure, life changes will make alterations in the type of service one can do, but both men and women of age provide valuable service. Consider a few ways in which age is a benefit.

Example

A man who serves as an elder of a congregation must be spiritually mature, i.e., "not a novice" (I Timothy 3:6). Furthermore, he is to be an example to the flock (I Peter 5:2-3). While it is true that he already meets these qualifications at the time of his appointment, is it not reasonable that years of experience increase his ability to advise, exhort, or rebuke troubled souls and lead new converts? His example of godliness should inspire all who know him. What a blessing he is to the congregation. "The silver-haired is a crown of glory if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

Counsel

Older women, as well as older men, can give wise counsel to couples involved in troubled marriages (Titus 2:2-4). Our modern society accepts divorce as though expected, and many are surprised when they meet a couple that has celebrated a golden anniversary. It is so rewarding to be able to offer guidance to younger couples. If you have a spiritual problem, would you not rather seek the counsel of someone whose life reflects the character you want to emulate?

Wisdom

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10). This proverb is the capstone of the book of Proverbs. It is true that even the young who fear the Lord are able to make wise choices, but individuals who have experienced life's full range of good times and tough times are able to share insights that come only with age. Many times, old age leaves us in debilitated bodies, but the inward

spirit is filled with the wisdom of God's word. There is no reason for this person to "retire."

Patience

Young people tend to be impatient. As a young preacher, I used to hope that each sermon or Bible class would result in immediate response. I would tend to be disappointed when my good brethren did not move as quickly as I thought they should. But I soon learned that, like any farmer who sows seed, it takes time for the plant to grow. Give it water and nurture it, but wait patiently. As the saying goes, "Rome was not built in a day." Patience is a virtue of senior citizens.

Knowledge of God's Word

You have probably seen a new Christian who was so excited about obeying the gospel that he/she wanted to know everything in the Bible all at once! Of course, that individual soon learned how deeply the Scriptures reveal the mind of God (I Corinthians 2:6-16). By contrast, consider the blessing of a person who, over many years, has continually added the knowledge of God's word by daily reading, meditating, and memorizing. The senior Christian is a wellspring of faith who can share God's word with others.

Are there any who feel that the aged Christian has reached a time to quit? Has the younger generation passed him or her by? He may not be able to do what he used to do, but years of faithful service to God have molded him into a unique blessing to all who seek to follow his example, learn from his counsel, be guided by his wisdom, yield to his patience, and be filled with his knowledge of God's Word.

"You shall rise up before the grayheaded and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God, I am your God" (Leviticus 19:32).

"But fools despise wisdom and understanding" (Proverbs 1:7).

The Resurrection Of Jesus

By Terry Wane Benton

It was evidence-based faith that drove the apostles to testify of Jesus' resurrection openly. If Jesus were only a man, then the body should have remained in the tomb guarded by Roman soldiers. If it were still there after three days, the religion of Christ would have been over, squashed by the self-evident facts. Peter testified that the Jews' own scriptures testified of One who would not see corruption and whose soul would not be left in Hades (the realm of the dead). The prophetic scriptures plus the empty tomb and missing body of Jesus, plus the eyewitness testimony of seeing Jesus alive, plus the new courage of the eyewitnesses to keep telling what they had seen and heard even upon threat of death shows us the reason the Lord's church could spring forth in the very city of Jesus' crucifixion, converting thousands, and then marching forward into all the world. Thus, their faith and mine are not blind faith. It is not blind faith, but evidence-based conviction.

The Old Testament is evidence of prophecy, prophesying of the coming Messiah. It is a powerful testimony that God is in the prophetic word. The New Testament is eyewitness testimony of Jesus being the prophesied Messiah and Savior. I would challenge all to look at the evidence fairly and carefully. There is a verdict that the evidence forces in the fair-minded (Acts 17:11).

Have you examined the evidence? I would be happy to study that evidence with you!