

## Getting Older

### *Prayer*

Good Morning, this week as I was talking to the Lord, he showed me that our culture has a fixation on the young. This is a great thing because they are our future. Yet, there was a specific emphasis in our communication this week. Maybe the Lord was giving me a message of encouragement as I have reached middle age.

I didn't think I was middle aged till my wife took my suit the cleaners and they said it was way out of style ...they didn't know how to clean armor...

As I look back on my life and all the adventures I have had, I have lived a full life. When I think and reflect on some of the things I have done and accomplished, I have come to recognize my life has been full.

Like everyone else, I have memories where I am not proud of my actions. Fortunately, I have given them to God so that they cannot impact me now.

You know the first thing that happened to me when I came to the Lord at 5 years of age was that I began to speak in tongues immediately. Quite the surprise! Then when the presbytery team came to our church they called me up and I was told I would be a pastor one day. I quite frankly didn't believe it. In fact, I ran from it for 40 years... I have often been reminded of the rebellion of Israel and their wandering in the desert for 40 years. But the Lord had a call on my life. This was a call that I answered. And I have never been more content or happy in all my years.

I must say that I am not relating all this to talk about myself, but rather I am leading to a point.

The first thing that the enemy did when I decided to follow the Lord was put fear in my heart about the provision for my family. The second thing he did was try to place fear in my heart about my relationship with my wife. You see the enemy does have fiery darts that he throws at us. Yes, he has been defeated and Jesus has overcome, he is on borrowed time, but make no mistake he is still trying to destroy families, relationship and lives. If we don't have on our armor we are vulnerable.

Perhaps, the most disheartening attack of the enemy at that time was condemnation, guilt and shame. He tried to tell me that I was past it. Look at all the time you wasted, all the souls that you could have reached, all the people you could have spoken too, all those missed opportunities. He tried to convince me that I was old and out of date, no longer cool and so on. He tried to derail me based on my age.

Now at first I bought into this and was discouraged, but as I sought the Lord in prayer the Holy Spirit ministered to me and literally showed me what the Lord was teaching me in each facet of my life in the desert. He showed me how he built my

confidence, he taught me how to teach, he taught me so many lessons that to relate them all to you here would take half the day. In short, at the end of my time in meditation on the things of God in my life, the Holy Spirit had led me from thinking I was past it, to a rebirth in my heart and in my spirit. He effectively healed me from something I never even knew was wrong.

Okay, so why the journey through the preachers life?

It is because this week God showed me that many people in his church think that they are too old or too young to make a difference. They are either too inexperienced or too old to be vital and of use in the kingdom.

This premise led me to God's word. Through its pages he showed me his thoughts on the subject. Let's look now at some scripture and the principles therein:

Have any one of you considered the words of the Lord in Deuteronomy 5:33?

*You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.*

Live long and possess this land! This scripture implies that God grants long life to those who obey his will.

God has instilled a legacy of honor. In a culture of honor we are to honor those who are elder among us. This means our mothers and fathers. Don't believe me, lets go to Exodus 20:12

*Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you*

In fact, it was so important to our Lord God that he emphasized it as one of the big 10!

1 Kings 3:14

*And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.*

As people age among us they are to be honored. Proverbs 16:31

*Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.*

Guess what my study of the scripture has told me about the aged... When we depend on God, he grants us wisdom! Wisdom becomes a literal attribute of the elderly who have depended on God. What an amazing resource God has given us

and yet, the modern perspective is to ignore the elderly and focus only on the youth. God told us: "Every joint supplies... not just the young ones."

Proverbs 3:13-16 ESV

*Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.*

Wisdom adds years to our lives. Doesn't it make sense then that those with greater age have wisdom to share?

Proverbs 9:10-11

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.*

God gives us insight as we learn about him and he adds years to those who seek knowledge of him. Why? Do you think it possible that he plans to use those who are getting on in years to mentor and teach those who are yet young?

Humm... Turn with me to Joel 1:2-3

*Hear this, you elders; give ear, all inhabitants of the land! Has such a thing happened in your days, or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.*

He we see a clear mandate to pass down what we have learned by experience. In this case the lesson of the Locust. Yet, when we study it carefully there is a principle here. Can you see a legacy here? In fact, there is a responsibility to the oral tradition of passing down wisdom to the young? If I may be so bold... Wise council is a duty before God that those in their later years have to pass down their wisdom to those younger.

Humm... do you think that someone may think the pastor is cherry picking here? Well, let's look further.

We are warned to not be not be foolish and senseless. In fact, we read in Deuteronomy 32:7

*Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.*

Now let me as a preliminary question here... Do you see that God has a plan for those who are aging in his church? Do it look like he puts the elderly among us out

to pasture or does he intend them to provide a vital role with our youth today? You know I wish every person in the retirement home could here this message. I wish that every lonely elderly person in Salmo today knew his or her vital purpose. Friends, today it is my prayer that Jesus connects the elderly among us with the young among us.

Now, isn't that awesome! But with much wisdom comes responsibility...

Turn with me to Titus 2:2-5

*Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*

So I guess that means retirement doesn't include responsibilities to those younger in the kingdom of God.

Now back to the main message...

As younger members of the body we need to treat the elderly as the precious resource they are. Do they not deserve kindness and respect?

1 Timothy 5:1,2

*Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity*

Are there mothers and fathers in God's kingdom? YES!

This morning, the crux of the message is that we as a church have a duty - yea even a responsibility to care for the elderly among us. Each of these people has been created in the image of God and they are his children and he loves them.

Now though most in the church understand this aspect of the ministry of the aged, the message this morning is that the Word of God tells us that old age is considered in a very positive light. It is a reward for a life devoted to our Lord and savior.

The elderly among us which in the time of Jesus would be anyone over 50 but today is more readily recognized as 70 have a lot to offer us. They have a ministry to those who are younger to impart their wisdom, leadership and guidance.

As a culture let us not put our elderly out to pasture and provide token care, but integrate them into our walk with the Lord, recognize why God has placed them in our churches and bless them for they have God's blessing on their lives.

It is amazing to see.

Once as a younger man I watched in a program where young kids in junior high who were thought to be uncontrollable were exposed to a new program. These kids were destined to special schools, juvenile lockup or worse. Essentially, their teachers had written them off.

They could either go to the school or be given one more chance by participating in the program....

What was the program?

The child psychologist took these kids into a retirement home and for four hours a week for 6 months they would sit and talk with the elderly. After a while they were taught crib, and various other games. After about a month, a funny thing happened, I went in to observe and I saw these kids laughing and having a good time. The elderly folks had seen rebellion, they had raised their own kids and they were simply content to just be with these kids and build relationship. The kids feeling accepted... responded to the wisdom of the elderly and became friends.

The lonely elderly had the company they so desperately desired and the dysfunctional kids became functional through patience and love. Yes there were some bumps, but by the end of the program when the 6 months were up something amazing happened. I share this with you because it impacted my perceptions so greatly.

I came back to the facility one week after the program had ended with the psychologist to see how the elderly felt about the program. I was astonished to find out that over ½ of the kids in the program still came by regularly to visit.

Now granted that was 25 years ago now, but I believe it exemplifies principles in God's word.

My friends, if you feel like you are too young to make a difference. Look at the little girls taking up the offering. Look at the young man who watches over them, who helps the teachers in Sunday school and who runs the soundboard... More than anything else though, today if you have reached an age where you feel older or out to pasture, that is a trick of the enemy.

You elders in our church, I encourage you to look at this in the spirit in which it is offered. You are needed and God has a purpose for you. God uses the elderly...

Here is my final point...

When we look at the prominent figures in the bible we see them through the eyes of youth. Remember Moses and Aaron? How often is the simple fact of age missed? D

Turn with me to Exodus 7:7

Exodus 7:7

*Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty- three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.*

This was the beginning of the 40 years in the desert. God is patient and he uses us when we are willing... Age is not a barrier to God.

This morning I offer up the following blessing:

*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*

Prayer