

“HOW OLD ARE YOU?”

Gen.47:7-9

INTRODUCTION:

Did you ever have anyone ask you how old you were? Sometimes a “trick” question, but it wasn’t in our text when Joseph took his father in to meet Pharaoh. **[Read text: “(Gen 47:7-9 NIV) “Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, (8) Pharaoh asked him, “HOW OLD ARE YOU ?” (9) And Jacob said to Pharaoh, “The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.”** There are two important points in Jacob’s answer we want to touch on as we introduce this **lesson:**

- A. He recognized life as a pilgrimage.
 1. Men of faith in ages past both recognized and acknowledged they were strangers and aliens during their sojourn on the earth.” **Heb.11:13-** *“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.”*
 2. Peter implored God’s scattered children to recognize the tangible nature of their existence here on earth! **1 Pet.2:11-** *“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.”*
 3. This earth is not man’s home! He’s just passing through on his way to his permanent abode. **Ecc1.12:5, 7:** *“For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. (7) then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.”*
- B. He stated his years had been few and difficult.
 1. He was 130 at the time of the question, and lived another 17 years. **Gen.47:28.**
 2. Life is always considered fleeting. cf. **Job 14:1-2; Jas.4:14-** *“Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.”*

I. REGARDLESS OF YOUR AGE, YOU’RE NOT TOO OLD TO RENDER SERVICE TO GOD AND MAN!

- A. It’s tragic for some to think that we have nothing left to do but DIE!
 1. MANY, of such a disposition, will die a thousand deaths before death actually comes!
 2. Shakespeare: *“Cowards die many times before their deaths; the valiant never taste of death but once.”*
- B. It’s interesting to note that aged people have contributed some of the world’s most marvelous accomplishments.
 1. Moses was 80 when God called him to lead Israel out of Egypt. Though he asked for an exemption because of vocal defect, it’s noteworthy he didn’t ask to be excused for age. **Exod.4:10.**
 2. Commodore Vanderbilt, during the time he aged from 70-83 he gained \$100 Million.
 3. Cato, at 80, began the study of Greek. Asked why he was doing this at such an advance age, he replied, “I waited too long to start earlier.”
 4. Tennyson, at 83, wrote “Crossing the Bar”.
 5. Verdi wrote “Ave Maria” at 85.
 6. They, and countless others, found usefulness in their older ages!
- C. AGE is a quality of mind reflected by one’s dreams, and hopes, and ambitions.
 1. If these qualities have died, a man is OLD in spite of what may be but a few years.
 2. On the other hand, if dreams/ hopes/ ambitions are alive, one would be considered YOUNG though many years have crowned the head with whiteness, have plowed deep furrows in the face, and have rendered the steps tottery.
- D. Most, regardless of age, have already WASTED TOO MANY YEARS!
 1. Therefore, need to redeem the time **[buy up the opportunities]- Eph.5:16.**
 2. Age can be fruitful, beautiful, and blessed.

3. In the words of Robert Browning: *“AN AGE SO BLESSED THAT, BY ITS SIDE, YOUTH SEEMS THE WASTE INSTEAD!”*
4. **CICERO stated:** As I give thought to the matter, I find four causes for the apparent misery of old age; first, it withdraws us from active accomplishments; second, it renders the body less powerful; third, it deprives us of almost all forms of enjoyment; fourth, it stands not far from death. --Cicero

II. IDEALLY, WE SHOULD HAVE SPECIAL REGARD & CONSIDERATION [GENUINE RESPECT, if you please] FOR THE AGED.

- A. Fundamentally and primarily, because the Bible TEACHES that we must, in such passages as: **Lev.19:32-“Honor the face of the old man”**. **1 Tim.5:1-“Rebuke not an elder...”**.
- B. And those who are aged **SHOULD HAVE A SPECIAL DESIRE** to be **WORTHY of honor!**
 1. And that comes **through service that is continuing**, instead of service that is **EXCUSED!**
 2. None of us can just “lay down the reins of activity **because we’ve reached a certain age plateau!**”
 3. Paul the apostle was probably around his mid-sixties when he wrote those words to the Philippians in **Phil.3:13-14-** *“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

III. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF DANGERS WE SHOULD GUARD AGAINST AS WE BEGIN TO FEEL WE’RE GETTING OLDER:

- A. **THE FALSE NOTION THAT YEARS ALONE BRING WISDOM!**
 1. **EVEN IN VIEW** of such passages as **Job 32:7-** *“I thought age should speak, And increased years should teach wisdom.”*
 2. But YEARS don’t always TEACH, for some of us **have been unable to profit** from many of our experiences.
 3. GRAY MATTER has always solved more problems and accomplished more service than gray hair!
- B. **UNBELIEF.**
 1. Caleb at 85 requested the difficult task of driving the giants out of a portion of the land of Canaan. **Josh.14:6-12-** *“Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. (7) “I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as it was in my heart. (8) “Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. (9) “So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.’ (10) “And now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. (11) “I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. (12) “Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the LORD has spoken.”*
 2. **WHY?** Because he had a self-confidence that comes from being closely associated with the Lord in His work. HE BELIEVED IN HIMSELF! Note **vs. 11-** *“I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me!”* **Faith in self is one of the pre-requisites of success!**
 3. **ALSO,** he had FAITH in GOD! Note **vs. 10-** *“And now behold, the Lord has let me live these forty-five years.”*

4. He further believed he *COULD STILL BE A TOOL OF GOD'S*, that **God would WORK THROUGH HIM**. Note **vs. 12-** "*Perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out as the LORD has spoken!*"
 5. As we GROW OLDER, our faith needs to CONTINUE TO GROW in **Self/in God/& in our Ability to be competent & qualified to render effectual service to our God!**
- C. **FUTILITY**. [An attitude of life being meaningless or senseless; uselessness; hopelessness; hollowness; laboring in vain.]
1. We can look to Caleb for another inspiring example in this regard!
 2. At his age [85] he could have rendered himself useless by looking to the past rather than to the present or future; of reveling in bygone accomplishments rather than seeking new ventures to pursue.
 3. It's **CERTAINLY NOT WRONG TO RETIRE FROM MAKING A LIVELIHOOD** if you CAN and DESIRE TO, but only to have more time to be of service to GOD and your fellow man!
 4. **WE NEVER REACH A TIME IN THIS LIFE TO WITHDRAW FROM EFFORTS TO MORE ACCEPTABLY PLEASE GOD IN OUR ABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES!**
- D. **THE ERRONEOUS IDEA THAT THERE IS HONOR IN LONGEVITY.**
1. Honor is in SERVICE, not longevity. **Matt.23:11-** "*But the greatest among you shall be your servant.*"
 2. Methuselah, at 969 years, only accomplished a bunch of birthdays!
 3. Science and the medical community has been able to add a number of years to span of our lives.
 - a) But **a greater problem confronting us** is **NOT** how to add years to our life, but how to add **LIFE** to our **YEARS!**
 - b) It's not how LONG we live, but HOW WE LIVE that really makes our life count for something!
- E. **UNHAPPINESS, A SOUR AND FUSSY DISPOSITION!**
1. A life that has been consecrated and devoted to God will, in continued efforts of service, have a lot to help guard against such a danger!
 2. As our physical man tends to weaken with the certain signs of dissolution, the spiritual man should continue to grow stronger! **2 Cor.4:16-** "*Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.*"
 3. ANYONE who has known God and then starts forgetting what & WHO has been seeing us through life, will, in the words of the Wise Man in **Eccl.12:1-** **will start seeing ...**"*the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I HAVE NO DELIGHT IN THEM!"*
 4. If disappointments/ heartaches/ obstacles-of-life are trying to transform you into a **cynical-critic** or a grouchy-grumbler then be assured that the devil is camping hot on your trail!
 5. **SO BEWARE!** No wonder it's been said, "**THE DEVIL HAS NO HAPPY OLD PEOPLE!**"
- F. **UNFAITHFULNESS TO GOD.**
1. As we continue to draw nearer, facing the setting of life's sun, every one of us should be able to say with great faith, "**NOW IS OUR SALVATION NEARER THAN WHEN WE BELIEVED!**" -**Rom.13:11.**
 2. There's no greater tragedy than one who's been ardent & faithful & true to God to turn in latter years to deny, by word or deed, that faith that's been so much in that productive life!
 3. Faithful for so long, then to finally give in to Satan. So near home, and yet LOST.

CONCLUSION:

As the evening shadows are beginning to lengthen FOR ALL OF US, we press onward with this faith and philosophy: **WE KNOW NOT THE FUTURE, BUT WE KNOW THE GOD WHO DOES! IT IS NOT HOW WE START THE RACE, BUT HOW WE FINISH IT THAT REALLY COUNTS!**