

“**NOT OVER THE HILL AND NOT OUT OF THE RACE**”

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Text: Ps. 78:1-7

Very often when we think about getting older and entering our senior years we think we will be like the three widow ladies who lived together.

■ As the story goes, three widow ladies lived together in one house. One morning as they began their day the first lady, getting out of bed, stopped halfway and wondering out-loud to herself she said, “Now was I *getting out* of bed or was I *going to* bed? I can’t remember.”

The second lady found herself paused halfway in motion also, with one foot in the tub and one foot out. She also wondering out loud and said to herself, “Now was I getting *in* the tub or was I getting *out* of the tub? I forgot.”

The third lady, overhearing the other two as she headed for the kitchen, said to herself, “I’m sure glad that I’m not as bad off as those two. They can’t remember a thing. Knock on wood.” Then pausing in her tracks she said to herself, “Now was that the front door or the back door?”

In spite of this familiar view of the "Golden years," the later years of life can be the most productive of all -- especially for God.

■ *Someone wrote*, “People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul. You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt, as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear, as young as your hope, as old as your despair. In the central place of every heart there is a recording chamber. So as long as it receives message of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage -- so long are you young.

When your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then, and only then are you grown old - and then, indeed, as the ballad says, you just fade away.”

Instead of fading away, God's people should be a *blaze of Glory!* Instead of slowing down in God *give Him all you've got!* Senior Adults, you must never forget that, in Christ, today is not too late to make the greatest *contributions* of your life.

I. YOU HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO *GIVE*.

A. It may be that you feel the least like giving at this point in your life.

■ Someone wrote, *YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLDER WHEN...*

“Almost everything hurts. What doesn't hurt doesn't work anymore. It feels like the morning after the night before, and you haven't been anywhere. All the names in your little black book end in M.D. You get winded playing chess. You look forward to a dull evening. You still chase women but you have forgotten why. You turn out the lights for economic, not romantic reasons. Your knees buckle and your belt won't. You are 17 around the neck, 42 around the waist, and 126 around the golf course. You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there. You try to straighten the wrinkles in your socks and you find you aren't wearing any. A little old gray-haired lady tries to help you across the street. She's your wife.” (Hewett, 25)

But remember now is a "golden" opportunity to *let God use what He has been making over all these years.*

B. Take a look at those who have been used by God.

- Moses did not even begin to lead Israel until age 80 and then did so until age 120.
- Joshua led until 110 years old.
- Daniel was thrown into the lions den at age 90.

II. YOU HAVE MUCH TO *TEACH*.

Job 12:12 says, “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?”

A. You have learned many lessons from God and life.

It's been said, “As people grow older they tend to become quiet. They have more to keep quiet about.”

There are some things to keep quite about and many to tell.

■ **The Psalmist said in Psalms 78:2-4** *“I will utter hidden things, things from of old-- what we have heard and known, what our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.” (NIV)*

B. Our younger generation needs to be taught in many areas.

Example: prayer, sacrifice, commitment...all which you have learned.

Teach the joy of living as a Christian not the fear of living. One elderly lady, when looking back over her life had this to say about what she would do differently. She writes,

■ *“I'd dare to make more mistakes next time; I'd relax; I would limber up; I would be sillier than I have been this trip; I would take fewer things seriously; I would take more chances; I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers; I would eat more ice cream and less beans; I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones.*

You see, I'm one of those people who lives sensibly and sanely hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to do nothing else, just moments, one after the other instead of living so many years ahead of time. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, hot water bottle, raincoat, and parachute. If I had to do it again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dinners; I would ride more merry-go-rounds; I would pick more daisies.” (Hewett, 25-6)

III. YOU HAVE MANY TO REACH.

A. Young people and older people are exactly alike in at least one way.

Neither thinks the other understand them. If this is true then you are in a great position. You are uniquely able to win your peers like no one else.

B. There is a tremendous harvest of souls to be reaped.

■ In 1991 there were over 31.8 million people in the USA 65 years and older. *Newsweek*, Oct. 4, 1993 reported that an additional 6,000 people were turning 65 years old every day.

By the year 2040 an estimated **76 million** Americans will be 65 years or older.

CONCLUSION

You may or may not feel over the hill today but you are **definitely not out of the race**. *You have much to give and teach and many to reach!* Set as your highest priority to be used of God.

■ **Ben Patterson writes in *The Grand Essentials*:**

“I have a theory about old age..I believe that when life has whittled us down, when joints have failed and skin has wrinkled and capillaries have clogged and hardened, what is left of us will be what we were all along, in our essence.

Exhibit A is a distant uncle...All his life he did nothing but find new ways to get rich. He spent his senescence (last days) very comfortably, drooling and babbling constantly about the money he had made. When life whittled him down to his essence, all there was left was raw greed. This is what he had cultivated in a thousand little ways over a lifetime.

Exhibit B is my wife's grandmother...When she died in her mid-eighties, she had already been senile for several years. What did this lady talk about? The best example I can think of was when we asked her to pray before dinner. She would reach out and hold the hands of those sitting beside her, a broad, beatific smile would spread across her face, her dim eyes would fill with tears as she looked up to heaven, and her chin would quaver as she poured out her love to Jesus. That was Edna in a nutshell. She loved Jesus and she loved people. She couldn't remember our names, but she couldn't keep her hands from patting us lovingly whenever we got near her.

When life whittled her down to her essence, all there was left was love; love for God and love for people. (Larson, 187)

References

Hewett, James S. (Ed.). *Illustrations unlimited*.

Larson, Craig B. (Ed.). *Illustrations for preaching and teaching*.

