

# They Shall Bear Fruit in Old Age

## Psalm 92:12-15

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. On PBS, a tribute to a Broadway producer or director, quoted from someone else, the name I did not catch: “First you are young . . . Then Middle Age . . . Then wonderful”
- B. **ILLUSTRATION:** “Papa, you was new back then.” David Burton’s young grandson looking at a picture of David, Patsy, & two daughters.
1. Physically speaking, we are not going to be new forever.
  2. We read from Ecclesiastes 12 and see a preview of coming attractions that don’t seem to be very attractive . . . But they serve a purpose, a reminder that our time is winding down, the time of our departure is drawing closer. In baseball terms, while we may have hit the warning track in life, and still have a ways to go before hitting the wall.
- C. **THE AGING PROCESS APPEARS TO BE CLEARLY ADDRESSED IN ECCLESIASTES 12:3-7** The meaning may be:
- **keepers of the house** — Your arms and hands tremble.
  - **strong men** — Your legs, knees, and shoulders weaken and you walk bent over.
  - **grinders** — You start to lose your teeth.
  - **windows** — Your vision begins to deteriorate.
  - **doors** — Either your hearing starts to fail, or you close your mouth because you've lost your teeth.
  - **grinding** — You can't chew your food, or your ears can't pick up the sounds outdoors.
  - **rise up** — You wake up with the birds early each morning, and wish you could sleep longer.
  - **music** — Your voice starts to quaver and weaken.
  - **afraid** — You are terrified of heights and afraid of falling while you walk down the street.
  - **almond tree** — If you have any hair left, it turns white, like almond blossoms.
  - **grasshopper** — You just drag yourself along, like a grasshopper at the close of the summer season.
  - **desire** — You lose your appetite, or perhaps your sexual desire.
  - **long home** — You go to your eternal [long] home and people mourn your death.
  - Verse 6 describes a **golden bowl — a lamp — hanging from the ceiling on a silver chain.**

The chain breaks and the bowl breaks. The fragile "cord of life" is snapped and the light of life goes out. Only wealthy people could have such costly lamps, so Solomon may be hinting that death is no respecter of persons.

The verse also pictures a well with a windlass for bringing up a pitcher filled with water. One day the wheel breaks, the pitcher is shattered, and the end comes.

D. In **Psalm 92:12-15**, We find a description of the righteous. We will allow this marvelous passage to serve as our lesson text for this study.

“The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Those who are planted in the house of the LORD Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

**They shall still bear fruit in old age;** They shall be fresh and flourishing,

To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

1. The righteous are described as palm trees and cedar trees flourishing in the house and courts of God. Note in particular **verse 14**: “They shall still bear fruit in old age. They shall be fresh and flourishing.”
  2. This passage certainly suggests that there is a place of service for the elderly in the work of God. They are able to “bear fruit” and remain “fresh and flourishing,” despite their old age.”
  3. **Psalm 71:18** – “Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.”
  4. **Hebrews 13:5** – “. . . I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
  5. That God can and does use the elderly should be apparent, especially when we take a few moments to consider God’s use of older people in the Bible.
- F. A goal for many people in life is a happy retirement . . . And there is nothing wrong with that.
1. They spend years saving and planning for the time in which they retire.
  2. They look forward to the free time to do what interests them.
  3. But is the concept of “retirement” applicable to the kingdom of God?
    - a. We may rightly retire from secular jobs, and that is okay . . . But what about our service in the church?
    - b. Granted, physical infirmities may sometimes be a hindrance, but is such a valid reason for retiring from the work of the church?
  4. Illustration: Man in Illinois . . . Retired denominational preacher . . . I served the Lord all those years and am now retired. I just stay at home waiting for Him to come and reward me.”

## GOD'S USE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE BIBLE

### A. MOSES AND AARON

1. They were chosen to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83 when the Exodus began. Exodus 7:7
2. They were both already past the normal life span Moses wrote about in the only recorded Psalm authored by him in the Book of Psalms. **Psalm 90:10** – “The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow—for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”
  - a. **ILLUSTRATION:** On November 15, 2010 I talked with an elderly man at lunch. His table was next to mine. Talked about many things . . . His dad always killed hogs on November 15, regardless of temperature or weather . . . talked about politics, etc. Shook hands and said he enjoyed talking to me . . . 12 days later he died of a massive heart attack. He did not tell me he was going to die in 12 days . . . He didn't tell me because he didn't know. He knew the exact date each year his father killed hogs, but he did not know the day of his own death.
  - b. Consider these thoughts:
    1. When we die we leave behind us all that we have and take with us all that we are.
    2. Those who are prepared to die are the most prepared to live.
    3. Death is the last chapter of time but the first chapter in eternity.
    4. What we weave in time we wear in eternity.
    5. A tombstone carried the sentiment of many: “I expected this but not just yet.
3. When God called Moses. Moses cited many excuses . . . **He never cited his advanced age as one of them.**

### B. JOSHUA & CALEB

1. At age 85 Joshua was given the charge of succeeding Moses as leader of the Israelites and then leading the conquest of Canaan. He lived another 25 years in that service before death claimed him at age 110.
2. Caleb was very much involved in the conquest of Canaan. He was 85 years old when he told Joshua to give him the mountain Moses had promised him at Kadesh Barnea. Joshua 14:6-11

### C. ZACHARIAH AND ELIZABETH

1. They became the parents of John the Baptist in spite of the fact that, according to **Luke 1:7**, they were “both advanced in years.”
2. They served the purpose of God while they were “both advanced in years.”

### D. SIMEON AND ANNA

1. Two elderly people who bore witness to the Christ child when He was brought to Jerusalem and presented to the Lord in the temple. Luke 2:25-38

2. Anna was at least 84 years old, and is described as one “who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” **Luke 2:37**
3. **Vs. 36** – “She was of a great age.” **Vs. 37** – “A widow of about eighty-four years.”

#### E. PAUL, THE AGED

1. Paul so refers to himself in Philemon 9
2. Yet we know at this time in his life he was:
  - a. Busy writing letters, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon while a prisoner in Rome.
  - c. After his release from prison, he would be traveling, visiting congregations, and continuing to preach the gospel and write letters of encouragement to brethren in many places.

#### F. SOME MODERN-DAY EXAMPLES AS WELL

1. Bro. **Bedford Davis** continued to serve as a deacon until near his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Faithfully carried out his duties in the benevolence program.
2. Bro. **Homer Daniel** of Chattanooga, TN, preached into his eighties. His preaching spanned nearly 70 years in spite of adversity.
3. Brother in Texas resided in a nursing home. In his nineties and yet was continue to hold Bible studies with the residents. Would call the preacher to come and baptize them. That was inspiring to read about in The Christian Chronicle.
4. Bro. **Doris Wilson**, Served as an elder for many years in southern Middle Tennessee (Pulaski), retired from his secular work and began to preach. Worked with the Ashland City congregation and drove back and forth to the Nashville School of Preaching.
5. Bro. **James Watkins**, now nearing his mid eighties . . . Preaching the Gospel television program . . . Gospel meetings . . . Lectureships, etc.
6. So many preachers and evangelists in my lifetime continued to serve right up to the point of their deaths. Example: Training for Service series in Chattanooga . . . Older preacher was sitting on front pew waiting to go up and speak . . . Suffered a heart attack and died.

### GOD’S USE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH TODAY

#### A. Older men can still serve.

1. Can continue serve as elders and deacons.
2. Can still teach Bible classes and home Bible studies.
3. Can still take an active part in the public worship services.
4. Can offer their wisdom and experience in encouraging other Christians.

#### B. Older women can still serve.

1. Can comply with **Titus 2:3-5** – “Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.

Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children,

To be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.”

2. Sadly, many women stop teaching when they reach the age when they are commanded to teach.

C. The Christian Chronicle article in January 2011 issue (page 31). A thirty year old writer Josh Ross) asked the question: “What kind of a Christian will I be at Age 70? Some are not there . . . Some are there . . . Some are past there. While there is a lot we may not be able to know in advance of that age, or any age, there are some things we can hope for.

1. An **ALIVE** Christian
2. A **HEALTHY** Christian
3. An **ACTIVE** Christian
4. A **FAITHFUL** Christian
  - a. Faithful in my attendance
  - b. Faithful in my doctrine
  - c. Faithful in my service to God
  - d. Faithful in my daily Christian life
5. An **ENCOURAGING** Christian to those traveling as you have already traveled. You know where the pitfalls are . . . You know where the stumps are also.
  - a. Speak words of encouragement.
  - b. Write notes and letters of encouragement
  - c. Send appropriate cards for various occasions
  - d. Telephone and speak words of encouragement
6. An **EVANGELISTIC** Christian
  - a. World Bible School teacher
  - b. Home Bible Studies . . . Invite others into your home
7. A **SERVING** Christian
  - a. Be a **volunteering** Christian. . . Look for opportunities to serve the Lord through your home congregation
  - b. Be a **dependable** Christian
  - c. Be a **reliable** Christian
8. A **WORSHIPPING** Christian
9. A **CARING** Christian . . . Care about the brotherhood and your home congregation
10. A **LEARNING** Christian . . . Still a student of the Word
11. A **PRAYING** Christian

12. A **READY** Christian . . . Ready to go home when it is time.
13. Be a **LISTENING** Christian. There will always be those needing someone to talk to.
14. A **ROLE MODEL** Christian. Let younger Christians see what they can become when they are older Christians.

## CONCLUSION:

### A. The Bible says the elderly can:

1. “. . . Declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” **Psalm 92:15**
2. Proclaim God’s strength to the next generation. Psalm 71:17-18
3. Recount God’s mighty works to the next generation. Psalm 71:18
4. There is much to be done while this race is being run. . .
  - There are fields to be plowed and I am going to plow them.
  - There are plants to be watered and I am going to water them,
  - There is a gospel to be shared and I am going to share it
  - There is fruit to be borne and I am going to bear it
  - There are people who are lost and I am going to find them.
  - There are people who do not know the way and I am going to show them.

### B. At every age, let the attitude of “Paul, the aged” be your attitude as well: “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.” **Philippians 3:12-15**

### C. Aging brethren, perhaps these words penned by a major English poet of the Victorian Age, Rober Browning in his poem entitled, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, can offer us encouragement, hope, and comfort as we continue our journey to its rightful end. It is the first of his thirty-two verses that I wish for you to hear: **“Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made. Our times are in his hand who saith, ‘A whole I planned, youth shows but half: Trust God: See all, nor be afraid?’”**

### D. **Ecclesiastes 9:10** – “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.”

### E. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**