

INTRO: Having worked on a secular job for almost fifty years, God has allowed me to reach that age that is normally called retirement age. That age where supposedly we sit back and enjoy the fruits of our labors, with work behind us and nothing but relaxing ahead of us. Time to fish, hunt, play golf simply do as we please, or just sit on the porch and sip a glass of tea while we watch the world go drifting by. I have seen individuals reach that "retirement" age, sit down and do nothing and just slowly die. If that is all there is to retirement, then why retire? The general consensus is "we have done our part, it is time to turn it over to the younger generation", but is this really what we want? If a person wants to live longer, they must remain active, they must do what they can while they can as the Lord gives them strength. Certainly as we reach further up in the years, we are no longer capable of doing what we did in our youth but that does not mean our usefulness is gone, rather we should be able to assist in ways we have never done before and never lose that desire to do more. One thing that is interesting in the Bible is that God never said when you reach the age of 65 or 66 or 70 or whatever, it is time to retire, time to sit down and do nothing, rather we are encouraged to continue to work as long as it is possible for us to work. God's retirement package is after this life, not during it. So the retirement plan that is really important is the one that takes care of you after this life, just not after your secular job.

A. As a middle aged man around 40 years of age, Caleb was one of the individuals chosen to spy out the Promised Land of the Israelites after their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. Moses encouraged 12 men to go through the land and see what the land is like, whether the people were strong or weak, whether few or many and what kind of land is it, good or bad, how are the cities and what kind of fortifications, is the land good for produce, has trees or not and even get some of the fruit of the land if possible and bring it out. So these twelve set out to do just that.

1. When they returned, they reported that the land was a good and plentiful land with some powerful inhabitants but Caleb said, "**We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we shall surely overcome it.**" Only he and Joshua knew that God would give them the land if they went forward, however the people listened to the other ten that doubted and because of not following the words of Caleb and Joshua, the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years till that whole generation of doubters died.

2. However, after those forty years, they went into the land with only Joshua and Caleb from the original group entered for everyone else had died. So the two oldest to enter the land was these two and after the land had been conquered and it was time to settle down, Caleb, now 85 years of age (the old man) said the words in the text we read and as an old man he was still ready to take the stronghold of the hill country that Moses had promised him. He said I am still able to do what God has called me to do and I shall drive out the enemies as the Lord has spoken. Probably the oldest man in Israel at that time and he said it is time to move forward.

3. People, we never get too old to do our work for the Lord, we never retire from God's employment but we work till the end. Yes, the young have the energy and the zeal and are able to do a lot of things the older generation cannot do; but we are not through either for with age should come maturity, wisdom and guidance

B. Vance Havner had a few comments on age: he stated **WE NEED YOUTH TO KEEP THINGS FROM GOING TOO SLOW AND AGE TO KEEP THINGS FROM GOING TOO FAST. AND BETWEEN THE TWO, THE "OVER-FORTIES" HAVE THE SUPREME OPPORTUNITY OF BALANCING ENTHUSIASM WITH EXPERIENCE. YOUTH HAS FIRE AND AGE HAS LIGHT AND WE NEED BOTH.** He also said the following: **WE HONOR GOD BY ASKING FOR GREAT THINGS WHEN THEY ARE PART OF HIS PROMISE. WE DISHONOR HIM AND CHEAT OURSELVES WHEN WE ASK FOR MOLEHILLS WHERE HE HAS OFFERED MOUNTAINS. LET NOT ADVANCING YEARS CAUSE YOU TO SETTLE FOR LESS THAN HIS BEST. WHY SHOULDN'T HIS WARRIOR'S LAST VICTORY BE HIS GREATEST? HIS OLD SOLDIERS NEVER DIE AND THEY NEED NOT JUST FADE AWAY.**

1. Out of all the battles that Cable must have fought, we only read about the last one where he said "**...give me this hill country.**" Perhaps his most difficult battle but he was ready and willing and we know that he came out victorious. Old Samson's greatest victory was his last victory. Moses led the children of Israel out of the promised land when he was in his 80's and for forty years he was the go-between for the nation of Israel and God. One of the last times we read about Daniel is when he is interpreting the dream of Belshazzar. Job 12:12, "**With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.**"

2. Too many try to use old age as an excuse for doing nothing, often saying they have "paid their dues" and it is time for other to take over. As for myself, I want to die while working for the Lord and

want to do more in the tomorrows than I have done in the past. Each day of my life for many years I have prayed that God make me a better servant, not a retiring servant. But so many say, "I cannot do anything" or "I just don't have the strength to do as I once did", but is that not just an excuse? Proverbs 20:29 **"The glory of young men is their strength and the beauty of old men is their gray hair."** Psalms 37:25, **"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread."** There are a lot of young people that need some guidance in this age in which we live for the world can be a very confusing place and the religious world in which we find ourselves can also be confusing, there is room for wisdom. Joel 1:2-3, **"Hear this, you elders; listen, all you inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this ever happened in your days or in the days of your ancestors? Tell your children about it, and let your children tell their children, and their children the next generation."**

3. I also know that in some cases, the aged can become a handful as in many cases, if their physical strength does not fail, their mental faculties may diminish and they often suffer from those diseases that are common for those in older years. But even in these cases, there are reasons, though we may not understand them all. **"Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."** Exodus 20:12.

a. And even if we must suffer because of the years, 1 Peter 4:1-2 says, **"Therefore, since Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same resolve -- because the One who suffered in the flesh has finished with sin -- in order to live the remaining time in the flesh, no longer for human desires, but for God's will"**. For us to live, should be for His will -- even in our old age, we can glorify Him and Paul even said in Colossians 1:24, **"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for His body, that is, the church"**. And we that are getting older should set an example before those that follow us showing that God is sufficient, even in the face of death, there is nothing to fear for **"...when this corruptible is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"** 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.

b. As Christian especially, the aged deserve kindness and respect (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Families have an obligation to provide for their aged (1 Timothy 5:8) and the churches have special responsibilities for the aged (1 Timothy 5:16).

CONCLUSION: Let us remember something, in the Bible old age is considered to be positive and a good fulfillment of a life devoted to God and the blessings and the responsibilities of aging should be accepted with thankfulness and gratitude and with a sense of stewardship. Our nation is hurting today for a lack of wisdom, especially from those who are older and should know better. The church of today is suffering for a lack of spiritual wisdom from those that are older and who should be wiser and set the example. If you can understand my voice, I want you to realize God is not finished with you yet - there is still purpose in this life and perhaps your greatest victory is just ahead of you. Do not sit down and wait to die, do not complain over the lot that God has allowed you to bear, do not think you are of no worth, do not think the Lord does not need you, do not think the church does not need you and do not think your family does not need you. It is just a shame that about the age we begin to have a little wisdom we can share with others, we may be getting close to death; but this is the way of life. We often speak to young people asking them to find their purpose in life -- I want to say to those that are getting older, you still have a purpose in life so keep on working till the Lord calls you home. Let me be honest with you, I do not consider 65 to be old, however when I started working, I thought 35 was ancient. But this much I have found out -- I know much more about life, I know much more about the things of God, I have much more knowledge to give today than I ever did previously. I have always enjoyed living and I can honestly say I am still enjoying the life that God has blessed me with. I can see a purpose in so many things that occurred in my life that I never understood when they were occurring and in looking back over almost 65 years of life I can honestly say the Lord has never one time forsaken me - though I was not always the kind of servant I should have been. I have often said that "life is not fair" but I know that "God is fair" so everything is good. God is good today, He always has been and He always will be. So we may all be getting a little older - so what? Don't quit, don't give up, don't stop working for the Lord and won't it be wonderful to stand before the Lord as a senior citizen and honestly say, "Lord, with Your help, I spent my life right up to the last minute in your service. Thank you for the years you have allowed in my life." We need the aged so consider it a blessing to grow old.