

Aging with Grace **04-03-16 AM**

A gray head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness. Proverbs 16:31

An important part of being a successful Saint is learning to age with Grace. We mean this not in the way the world does when it refers to aging gracefully (usually physical attribute such as beauty or physique), but with the spiritual Grace of God that we are commanded to grow in our lives. There are five points we ought to consider in our desire to age with grace.

1. Avoiding Bitterness As We Age - Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

One of the most common struggles of a Christian of age is that of bitterness. They may struggle with bitterness because they are resentful our bodies have betrayed us; as we get older our physical stamina decreases. Perhaps too we are resentful over life circumstances; fiscal strains that were unexpected, familial relationships that turn sour, or just life events in general leave many bitter in their latter years. Among Christians, bitterness is cause of stumbling (Hebrews 12:15). It can also cause others to be discouraged who look to those older than them for examples and hope. In Deuteronomy 20:8 Moses told the captains of the army to send home the fearful so that they do not infect others; is that our dilemma? We should be finding joy because we are looking forward to an eternal body and having achieved the ultimate success. Paul described his advancement in years in this way in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Worldly people focus on what is lost with age, Christians focus on what is won.

2. Finding Purpose As We Age - Titus 2:1-8

Sadly, many are deceived by society and the world with attitudes such as "I don't want to be a burden" on society or my children. This is a sinful attitude, as it rejects the will of God that younger generations are obligated AND honored to support the older (1 Timothy 5:1-16). How can we bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ if we are denied the opportunity by worldliness? Secondly, we live in a youth obsessed culture (similar to the one in 1 Kings 12:6-8) that does not see advancement in age as advancement in purpose. To the Christian mind aging leads to perfection and spiritual maturity; in the church, maturity is the highest commodity. We are commanded to seek and submit to it (Hebrews 13:7).

3. Being Open Minded As We Age - John 9:34

There is an old adage that says "*You can't teach an old dog new tricks*". It CAN be true if we are aging without Grace. In such a condition we rely on our experiences in life rather than God's revelation, and we give in to the temptation to be unteachable. Christians refuse to believe there is a time where anyone is unteachable, because we believe "*there is always something to learn*", as we are told repeatedly (Proverbs 1:5. 9:9). A wise man is ALWAYS learning; so we too should always strive for understanding.

4. Being Careful As We Age - Luke 12:15-21

The American Dream in 2016 is an early retirement and a life of leisure. Is this a Godly desire? Consider James 5:5 and Luke 16:25, which says that those who live for leisure fatten themselves for slaughter. Instead of the American Dream we ought to focus on The Christian Hope, which is an eternal retirement AFTER laboring and an eternity of leisure AFTER service. Paul described this in Philippians 1:19-21. We must be careful as we age that we are not trapped by the leisure mindset, and cursed by God.

5. Being Aware As We Age - James 4:13-16

Ecclesiastes 12 was written for the youth. Many look ahead in their years believing they know what the future holds, and setting expectations. In Ecclesiastes 11:7-10 we are warned that in whatever we do or aspire to do, we need to remember we are accountable for every choice we make. Too many believe that they will live a long life, and then their life ends at a young age. We are as close to death at 18 as 81; we simply are more aware of it at 81. We must learn to count our days as Moses reminded us in Psalm 90:10-12.

Intentionally aging in Grace is an important life choice in Christ. We have no choice but to get older, but we choose how we will do so. Gracefully aging in Christ leads to our reward.