

## **The Glory of Getting Older: It Takes Guts!**

Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

(Recognition of Baptist Retirement Homes)

Dr. Nate Leonard      June 6, 2021

We often give special attention to the young people within the church. I know you agree that it is important we do all we can to come alongside our young people and help them grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Today, I want to shift our focus to the other end of the age spectrum, to those we often refer to as older adults or senior adults; those who oftentimes go by names like Grandma and Grandpa, Mamaw and Papaw, Lala and Biggie, Lollie and Pop, or how about this one, Sweets (that's grandmother) and Tart. I think that grandfather got a bad deal.

The title of this message is The Glory of Getting Old with the subtitle, It Takes Guts! It does take guts, doesn't it? Getting older is not easy. Getting older comes with great challenges, some of which are physical. As we age we hurt more. We hurt everywhere. Things start to go. Hair, sight, hearing.

Earl, an 82-year-old man, went to the doctor to get a physical. A few days later the doctor saw Earl walking down the street with a gorgeous young woman on his arm. The doctor spoke to Earl, "Earl, it seems you are well!" Earl replied, "Just doing what you said, Doc."

The doctor immediately had a confused look on his face. Earl responded, "You told me to 'Get a hot mamma.'" The doctor frantically shook his head and replied, "Earl! I said, 'You've got a heart murmur!'"

In our older years, our hearing often starts to go, as well as the eyes, the back, the hip, etc., etc....getting older takes guts. But physical health is not my forte. You should talk to your physician about things like heart murmurs and I would suggest you be certain you have your hearing aids in when you do!

What I want to address today are just a couple of spiritual struggles I believe often arise as we get older. Now listen, our spiritual health has an impact upon our physical health and certainly our emotional health, doesn't it? In fact of the three, spiritual, physical, and emotional health, I believe the spirit is the most important. If you are right spiritually you can lose your physical and emotional health and still be ok. But if you are strong physically and emotionally and yet lack spiritual health, you are lost.

My prayer today is that you will be able to see there is a glory to getting older. Getting older is not glamorous by any means. I'm not proposing that. Still, your older years can be glorious. They can be beautiful in the Lord's sight. There is a way to live in your later years that yields the Lord's praise and blessing. I hope we will discover that way today.

If you are not yet into your later years then you likely have a parent or grandparent, aunt or uncle, or perhaps several friends, that are. A rising number of you are in the throes of being the primary caregiver to your aging parents. When did you last spend time thinking through their unique spiritual needs? My prayer is that this message might inspire you to consider how you might come alongside those older adults in your life and care for their spiritual needs. And listen, that isn't limited to family. It certainly includes church family and neighbors and all those older adults God has put in your path. Maybe God is calling you to consider how you might be the presence of Christ to an older adult today.

So allow me to share with you what I believe are two common misconceptions amongst older adults that are unbiblical and spiritually harmful. Interestingly enough, the two misconceptions are essentially opposites and yet both are wrong. Either will result in an unhealthy and unbiblical experience of your senior adult years. Our goal is to live a life, even in our older years, that brings glory to God.

Here is the first misconception that older adults should be wary of adopting. I do believe it is a lie of the devil and not what the Word of God says and many seniors fall into the trap of believing it.

**Misconception #1 - I can't "do" for the Lord like I used to, therefore, my life has less value than it once did.**

As we get older we simply can't do all the things we once did. Sometimes that is hard to accept and the reality is that most of us tend to derive our sense of worth, at least to some degree, by what we do.

Sometimes our sense of worth is entirely wrapped up in our doing. Many find their sense of worth entirely in their vocation, in what they do for a living. It is not an altogether unfamiliar story to hear of an individual who retires from their work and within a relatively short amount of time their health has declined to the point that they die, not because they got cancer or something like that, but because they simply lost the will to live.

Oftentimes those who find great joy in the freedom retirement brings to go and do come to a point in which the doing isn't so easy anymore. Sometimes that happens all at once due to a fall or a diagnosis of some disease. Other times it happens slowly over many years. The reality is if

we live long enough, our “doing” for the Lord is going to become more and more difficult and if we believe that what we do determines our worth we are in trouble.

I wonder if some of our older adults here today might feel a bit less valuable to the Lord because you do less for him these days than you once did. Maybe you are wrestling a bit with your sense of worth. Perhaps you fear that because you can't do like you once did you will fall out of favor with God, that His love for you will wain and your relationship become distant. If so, I want you to prayerfully consider that you might be believing something that is simply not true. Here is the biblical truth that I would share with you that I pray would free you once and for all of such lies.

- **Biblical Truth - Our “doing” for God does not earn us God’s favor. Christ earned for us God’s favor.**

What this means is that you don't have to “do” anything for the Lord to love you. He loves you because he is the Lord. He loves you and sent his son to do all that was required for you to be in a right relationship with Him now and forever, before you ever did anything for Him. This is something I imagine most of our older adults know, but perhaps you've not applied it to your unique situation, to your struggle in these older years.

Listen to what scripture says, **Ephesians 2:8-9** “**8** For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Your relationship with God which would include His love for you, His nearness to you, His redeeming work in your life, and every other promise given in scripture to believers...none of that is dependent upon what you can or cannot do for Him; rather, it is entirely dependent upon what Christ has done for you. The epitome of God's grace to us is Jesus upon the cross. Done.

**Hebrews 10:14** “**14** For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” So here is the promise that ensures we need not fear falling out of favor with God, even if our ability to “do” for Him diminishes to the point of nothing. Jesus has done all that was required so that we might be certain of God's steadfast love for us, so that we may be certain of our salvation. God loves you so much He will see you all the way to heaven. The evidence of this is Jesus.

Yes, you are moving slower these days or maybe you're not moving much at all, and yet you are no less loved by God. You are no less God's beloved child and coheir with Christ. So let me proclaim this biblically rooted truth to all our older adults who have ears to hear, your value and your worth are secure in Christ.

If you begin to question your worth, just look to the cross and see how loved you are. Don't for a second think that your inability to do for the Lord has diminished His love for you. The truth is, before you had done anything for His glory, even before you knew His name, Jesus died for you and instead of you. Put your faith in him and trust that your worth and your salvation are entirely secure even when all you can do is draw enough breath to say his name and even when that breath is gone.

So that is one side of the spectrum where I see older adults struggle, I can't "do" for the Lord like I used to, therefore, my life has less value than it once did. Now, here is the opposite side and as I mentioned earlier it is no less untrue and detrimental to making God look glorious in our older years. Write it in...

### **Misconception #2 - I have done so much for the Lord already I surely need not do anymore.**

So the first lie is born out of fear. If I can't keep doing like I've been doing then God won't love me as He has. This second lie is born out of pride. Look at all I've done! Look at how faithfully I've served Him for so many years! Look at how many positions within the church I've held, how many volunteer hours I've put in, how much I've done. Notice that the root of the problem is the same as the first misconception; placing our focus on ourselves rather than on Christ.

The unhealthy and unbiblical conclusion we draw from this errant perspective is that it's time for me to retire from Christian service. It's time for others to serve and for me to be served. I've crossed the finish line of my service so it's time for me to sit back and simply receive the benefits of what others are doing. Listen, when it comes to growing in faith and serving the Lord, we don't get to determine where the finish line is.

YouTube is full of videos of athletes running races who started to celebrate before they reached the finish line and ended up losing the race. Let's not be that foolish. The runner of the race doesn't determine where the finish line is. You've probably heard the saying, if you're still breathing, God's not done. It's true!

Paul writes in **2 Timothy 4:7-8, 7** "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing."

- **Biblical Truth - God desires for me to finish the race--to glorify Him until I take my final breath.**

Now we need to hear this and receive this in light of what we've already learned from God's Word. We're not running to the finish line to earn God's favor. That is not the point. We're

running to the finish line because we have been given God's favor. We're running not because we have to, but because we desire to, because our purpose in life is to glorify God, and serving Christ all of our life makes God look glorious, perhaps especially when we remain committed to Him through our older years.

Glorifying God at 70 or 80 or 90 may look very different than it did in earlier years, but that's ok. The goal is not to keep serving the Lord in the same way your whole life, the goal is just to keep serving Him in whatever way He allows. The goal is to use whatever sight and hearing and movement you have left in a way that glorifies the Lord and thus to keep on serving Him by being a servant to others.

Allow me to pause here for just a moment and say a personal word of thanksgiving to God for all you older adults who have been such faithful servants to me. I am amazed and humbled by your service. All of us "younger" folks ought to be overwhelmed with gratitude to our older adults for their service to us. Do you know who our primary prayer warriors are?

They're our senior adults. This is important because prayer is the most powerful tool a Christian has. Every day it is our older adults who can't be out doing that are in their homes, heads bowed, going to the Lord in prayer, fighting the good fight, battling in the spiritual realm for the sake of Christ, and their church, and their pastor. Thank you, senior adults. Thank you for continuing to fight the good fight and run the race for the glory of God and the sake of the church. Thank you for praying for me and my family.

Thank you for all the ways you continue to glorify God through the significant effort you make to be present in worship. It's hard to get up and get dressed; it's a long walk in, and sometimes the pew makes your back hurt. Yet you are faithfully present. You inspire us. You cause us to examine our hearts and all the excuses we younger folks make for not being here.

Do you know what I hear from most senior adults who are homebound? It's not what you would think. It's not "I miss eating out." It's not, "I miss socializing with my friends." They do of course. They certainly miss those things, but inevitably what rises to the top of their list is, "I miss church."

Thank you, older adults, for the kind notes of encouragement you are faithful to send. Thank you for your faithful giving. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Your service does not go unnoticed. You show us how good and glorious God is. Getting older isn't easy. It takes guts. It takes faith to persevere to the end. You demonstrate to us authentic trust in the Lord by not spending your retirement years focused on yourself and how much worldly pleasure you can squeeze out of your nest egg, but rather spending those years seeking to draw nearer to Christ because he is what you treasure above all. Thank you for your witness to us.

So there is no glory in getting older if we run the race because we fear that God will forsake us if don't keep running at the pace we once did. Nor is there glory in getting older if we draw a fraudulent finish line and declare the race over when the reality is we have not yet reached the end.

There is glory in getting older when we resist the temptation to become more and more self-focused, but instead keep our focus on Christ, seeking to make more and more of him. There is glory in getting older when we treasure what Christ has done for us more and more each passing year, even more than our hearing or eyesight, even more than our health, more than anything in this world, even more than life itself. This is how we run the race in our older years in a way that pleases the Lord and finish in a manner that brings glory to our great God.

There are at least three ways I pray we will respond here and now to God's Word. I would like us to pray specifically for the older adults in our lives. We'll do that in just a moment. I would also like to encourage you to consider responding through a financial gift to the Baptist Retirement Homes Foundation.

Did you know that out of all charitable giving in the US only about 3% goes to the aid of senior adults? A meager 3%. I am so very proud that we are part of the ministry of Baptist Retirement Homes (BRH) of NC. If you give to our church you are a part of that ministry through our budgeted missional giving, but today I wonder if you would consider a special gift.

As you learned in the video we watched earlier from Baptist Retirement Homes, should a resident of a Baptist Retirement Home outlive their resources due to rising costs or unexpected longevity they do not have to fear being put out on the street. Last year alone (2020), BRH distributed 3.6 million dollars in benevolent funds, ensuring every senior adult in their care has a forever home. It's hard to put a price tag on the comfort and care that provides for those senior adults.

If you would like to give to BRH you can be certain that 100% of your gift will be used to provide such care for seniors. Not a single penny goes to administrative costs or anything else.

If you would like to give, the easiest way to do that is to go to our church website, \_\_\_\_\_, and you'll find that we have put on the very front page a link that will take you to the BRH giving page.

There you will be able to fill in the necessary information and make a gift. If you would prefer to write a check you can make that out to \_\_\_\_\_ Church and simply write Baptist Retirement Homes in the memo line. We'll forward your gift to them promptly.

Now, let's join our hearts together in prayer. I'll give you a few prompts to guide your silent prayer and then I will close us. Take just a moment now and...

- Pray for the older adults in your life.
- Pray for the spiritual health and vitality of all those in their senior years.
- Pray for the ministry of Baptist Retirement Homes, their staff, and residents.

*Closing Prayer: Almighty God, your grace, mercy, and love astound us. You are faithful and true, holy and awesome, present and perfect. We praise you for who you are and all that you have done. Thank you for sending Jesus to be our savior. We look to the cross and we see our worth. Oh, how you love us. Lead us to love you more. Open our eyes to see and our hearts to receive the fullness of your love.*

*Father, we come before you and seek your blessing upon all of our older adults. They are in a season of life that is not simple, it is not easy. We pray you would draw near to them as they draw near to you. We pray you would bless them with your peace and give strength to their spirits that they might run the race to the end. We pray you would be glorified in them all of their days.*

*For those who struggle, we pray you would open our eyes to see the needs around us. We pray you open our hearts to love more fully the older adults in our lives. We pray you open our hands to give generously that they may feel secure, safe, and loved. May you be glorified in us, Lord, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.*

**The Glory of Getting Older: It Takes Guts!**

Ephesians 2:8-9; Hebrews 10:14; 2 Timothy 4:7-8

Listening Guide

(Recognition of Baptist Retirement Homes)

Misconception #1 - I can't "\_\_\_\_" for the Lord like I used to, therefore my life has less \_\_\_\_\_ than it once did.

- Biblical Truth - Our " \_\_\_\_\_ " for God does not earn us God's favor. \_\_\_\_\_ earned for us God's favor.

Misconceptions #2 – I have done so much for the Lord already I surely \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ anymore.

- Biblical Truth - God desires for me to \_\_\_\_\_ the race--to glorify him until I take my final \_\_\_\_\_.