

## **Growing Old – The Christian Life Handing on to the next generation**

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.  
King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

### **Growing Old – Handing on to the next generation.**

#### **Introduction**

Today we begin a new series of five talks looking at the subject of 'growing old.' Our title today is 'Handing on to the next generation.' *The rest of the talks in the series are entitled; 'How to serve God in restricted circumstances', 'Leaving it all behind', 'How not to do it!', and 'The best is yet to come!'. These, all in the Lord's will, of course.*

*Sometimes I wonder at the subjects I am given to speak on. I certainly do not consider myself to be 'old', but then, we are all getting older. In spite of our age, I'm sure we all have experience of our friends and our family growing old. Growing old is of course a natural thing and we cannot hold back the years, despite the vain efforts of some!*

The main consideration today is not so much the 'growing old' but the matter of 'handing on to the next generation.' We have a family business, and we are currently considering how best to hand over to the next generation, but let us remember that the Lord's work is His business, not ours! We will consider this today as we think about 'handing on.' However, especially as this is the first talk in the series, I think it right that we have a brief look first at what the Scriptures say about 'growing old.'

As usual, in my talks, I will be reading and quoting from the Authorised Version of the Bible, sometimes called the King James Version, and these references will be listed in the transcript which can be found on our website, [www.truthfortoday.org.uk](http://www.truthfortoday.org.uk). Increasingly I feel the importance of anchoring what I say to the Word of God. *Please feel free to download any of our talks to listen to, or print them off to read. If you have been blessed by our ministry, then please tell your Christian friends about us.*

#### **Growing old**

*You will be familiar with the saying, "Life begins at..." (and the number stated seems to increase the older the speaker is). Another saying you will know doubt have heard is, "You are only as old as you feel." I'm not sure about these, but certainly attitudes to growing old have changed in my lifetime. I remember my grandfather, and think of him as an old man, with his suit, shirt and tie, and trilby hat, but he would only have been in his sixties. Recently I spent time with my cousin who will be 60 this year, and dressed in his jeans and casual shirt, he certainly didn't look old, although he did say that he could not tackle the DIY jobs around the house with as much gusto as he once did.*

We read in Genesis of Methuselah whose life of 969 years is the longest recorded in Scripture. He lived before the great global flood. After that catastrophic event, the human lifespan was greatly reduced. For example, we read that Abraham died “in a good old age”, he was 175 years old. The same is said of David, who died “in a good old age” at 70 years. In his prayer, Moses says,

“The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Later he adds, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” How good if like Moses we prayed that prayer today, “Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (see Genesis ch. 5 v. 27; ch. 25 vv. 7-8; 1 Chronicles ch. 29 vv. 26-28; 2 Samuel ch. 5 v. 4, Psalm 90 vv. 10,12).

It is interesting to note that as the prophet Isaiah writes of the “new heavens and a new earth” he says, “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old...” I understand this to mean that during the kingdom reign of Christ, which is yet future, once more life expectancy will greatly increase. Is it possible that a child born at the beginning of Christ’s millennial reign could live through the whole 1000 year period? I believe so (see Isaiah ch. 65 vv. 17-25).

Perhaps the number of our years is of secondary importance to how we spend these years. We are all different physically, some enjoy good health and strength into old age, whereas some suffer ill health much earlier in life. The apostle Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that, “though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (See 2 Corinthians ch. 4 vv. 6-18). As you would expect, the Bible is balanced about what it says regarding old age. With age comes maturity and we need to respect our elders. The apostle Paul appeals to Philemon in relation to his runaway servant, Onesimus, as “Paul the aged”, which adds weight to his request. And there’s no retirement in the things of God, we read in the Psalms that there is still fruit to be borne in old age (see 1 Timothy ch. 5 vv. 1-2, 1 Peter ch. 5 v. 5, Philemon v. 9, Psalm 92 v. 14).

Job says that, “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding,” but goes on to say, “He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.” I don’t know how you view these words, but I am inclined to think that Job is saying that only God has perfect wisdom and understanding, and that we cannot always trust the wisdom and understanding of the aged. Perhaps this would fit the narrative as his friends; Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar were probably older in years than Job, and were certainly older than Elihu, who said, “Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgement” (see Job ch. 12 vv. 12, 20, and ch. 32 v. 9).

All through my life I have heard older folks giving advice to the younger ones. I have heard many older men praying for the next generation, especially as they are being brought up in an increasingly ungodly society. How welcome that godly advice is, and what an encouragement these prayers are! However, as I have gotten older, I have become increasingly aware of the need for the younger folks to pray and watch out for the older ones. Don’t think for a minute that old people are beyond making mistakes, or poor judgements. There is a line in an old hymn which often comes to my mind,

O Jesus, Lord, Great Shepherd of Thy sheep  
Lead Thou us on:  
Foolish and weak, we need Thee still to keep  
And lead us on:  
Dangers abound, and we are not yet home,

O keep us near, nor let us from Thee roam.  
W. Easton 1850 - 1959

How true that is, "Dangers abound, and we are not yet home." So whether we are old or young, we need to keep close to the Shepherd.

### **The work is the Lord's**

In my introduction I said that we need to remember that the Lord's work is His business, not ours. If we have any part in doing the Lord's work, then it is because He has entrusted that to us. Should we fail in the work, His work will not fail! Never let us think that God is depending on us, individually, to accomplish His purpose. The weary and overburdened prophet, Elijah, had to learn that lesson. In the face of great opposition he told the LORD that he was the only one left who was jealous for the LORD God of hosts, but the LORD gently let him know that He had 7000 men in reserve. Elijah was told to go and anoint Elisha who would take over God's work from him. You see, God always has His man or woman, and His work will always be done (see 1 Kings ch. 19).

I want to take two Scriptural examples, one from the Old Testament, and one from the New Testament, to show how God carries on His work with spiritual men. The first is the work begun with Moses and continued with Joshua, and the second is the work given to Paul then continued with Timothy. [In passing you may remember that both Moses and Paul \(or Saul\) were among a small group of seven persons whom God called twice by name. At the burning bush the call was, "Moses, Moses", and on the Damascus Road it was "Saul, Saul" \(see Exodus ch. 3, Acts ch. 9\).](#)

In Exodus we read,

"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the land of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey..." (see ch. 3 vv. 7-8).

In Matthew we read the words of the Lord Jesus,

"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The church would be built, not on Peter, but on Peter's confession, when in reply to the Lord's question,

"But whom say ye that I am?", Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (see Matthew ch. 16 vv. 13-18).

In quoting these 2 verses, I trust it is clear that the work is the Lord's. Moses was a nobody, looking after his father-in-law's sheep in the desert when he turned aside to see the burning bush. He was amazed that although the bush was on fire, the fire was not consuming the bush. It was then that he heard the voice of God, "Moses, Moses." Saul was a proud Jew who could not accept that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He was bent on stamping out the name of Christ, by persecuting to death the early Christian church. But on the road to Damascus the Lord called to him, "Saul, Saul", and asked, "why persecutest thou me?" He was converted to Christ, and we later read how that Saul was sent to bear the name of Christ to Gentiles, to kings, and to the nation of Israel.

We may not be called to deliver the people of God out of slavery, or to establish the church, but we can be those who do the Lord's work. The Lord's work is varied, and it is impossible for me to make a list of things to do, but you will know what the Lord has given you to do. If we have a knowledge of His word, the Bible, and are guided by His Spirit, who indwells every believer, then we will know His mind in relation to our service for Him. The question asked by Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?", is one we should all ask, but remember He is the Lord, we are His servants, so we have no say in His will for us.

Perhaps when we think about the 'Lord's work' we think of missionaries overseas, or those who have public teaching ministries, but the Lord's work is often much smaller and quieter. I was reminded recently of the first recorded words of the Lord Jesus in Scripture, when He asked, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He had been sitting with the learned ones listening and asking questions. It reminded me that to an overburdened Martha, Jesus said, "One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part." She was sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to His word. Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" and then entered into a boat where He fell "asleep on a pillow." I love to think that someone was close enough to Him to hear His word, and provide Him with a pillow! In resurrection the Lord says to Peter, "Feed my lambs", "Shepherd my sheep" (JND), but from the cross He committed the care of His mother to John 'the beloved.' So we see, being occupied with Him and His word, and caring for His own, is the Lord's work (see Luke ch. 2 vv. 41-50, ch. 10 vv. 38-42, John ch. 21 vv. 15-17, John ch. 19 vv. 26-27, Matthew ch. 8 v. 20, Mark ch. 4 v. 38).

### **The Lord's choice of servant**

In the cases of Moses and of Paul, it is very clear that God chose them for a particular work. I wonder if they would have been our choices? Would they have won through on our careful vetting procedures? Moses had fled Egypt years earlier when it became known that he had killed an Egyptian in defence of his fellow Hebrew. He had spent 40 years as a shepherd, tending sheep in the desert, with little or no contact with the people of God, the Israelites. Surely there would be someone in Egypt who was suffering alongside the Israelites whom God would choose to lead His people? Paul was a deeply religious Jew, and a persecutor of the church. He had been a consenting witness to the stoning of Stephen (the first Christian martyr). As we have already said, He was determined to rid the world of the name of Christ. On hearing of his conversion, Ananias was very concerned about greeting Paul, as his reputation had preceded him. So, perhaps we, too, would be forgiven for not thinking that he was the ideal candidate to preach the Gospel and teach the truth of God, completing the canon of Scripture with his writings.

[Neither Moses nor Paul were volunteers for the Lord's work. In fact, Moses did his very best to talk himself out of it, and Paul said that he was 'apprehended' \(or taken by force\) by Christ Jesus. But God makes no mistake with His choice of servants.](#)

Neither Moses nor Paul had a recognised qualification, or term apprenticeship, or even a training course, before starting in the Lord's work. But God had known these men from before they were born and had guided their lives so that they were ready for the job ahead.

If the Lord chooses you for a special work, He will provide the means and the grace for you to do it. It won't be easy, and there will doubtless be discouragements along the way, but whatever it is, "do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men" (see Colossians ch. 3 vv. 23-24).

### **Handing on to the next generation**

We really need to look at the matter of 'handing on to the next generation', after all this is the subject of the talk. I do trust, though, that what I have said up to this point has given you

something to think about. Let us consider what 'handing on' means; and ask, who the 'next generation' is?

Handing on does not mean retirement from the things of God. Whilst it is true that growing old may mean that certain activities we once did cannot be done now, we must remain active in the Lord's work. Remember we are servants to our Master and Lord, not employees! You may be surprised in me saying this, but I believe sometimes the Lord can bring some aspects of His work to an end. So perhaps not every service for the Master can be handed on. However, in many cases the work does continue, and you may have heard the saying, 'The Lord buries His servants, but carries on His work.' This was literally the case with Moses, the only person we read about who the LORD buried. Sadly, Moses' failure meant that he could not lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, but the work of leading the people had to continue. Joshua was chosen for this task, his appointment was made by God, not Moses (see Numbers ch. 27 vv. 15-23).

We read first of Joshua in relation to conflict with the enemy. Amalek fought against Israel and Israel prevailed as long as Moses' hands were uplifted. Joshua won the fight, but the battle was the LORD's. Moses built an altar and called it Jehovah-nissi (The Lord our banner). What a lesson for Joshua! Joshua, the son of Nun, became servant to Moses and was with him on Mt. Sinai when the instructions for the Tabernacle, and the Law, were given. You will remember that when they came down, Joshua thought he heard the sound of war in the camp, but it was much worse than that! It was the sound of Israel's idolatry as they danced round the golden calf. That day the sword was used to slay 3000 Israelites. Through this experience of the conflict without and the conflict within, Joshua was prepared by God to take over from Moses (see Exodus ch. 17 vv. 8-16, ch. 32 vv. 15-28).

I want to stress this point, that Joshua was not a relative of Moses, he was his servant. Joshua was chosen by God because of the man he was, not chosen by Moses because of who he was. We thank God that, in His mercy, He often blesses entire families of His people. But when it comes to handing on the baton of service, there can be no room for nepotism, giving special preference to our family or friends. There are many lessons for us in the Old Testament and I always think that the ones which the Lord Jesus speaks of are especially important. Speaking of His second coming, and the days that would characterise the world at that time, Jesus spoke of Lot and added the solemn warning, "Remember Lot's wife" (see Luke ch. 17 vv. 26-37). I believe that there was little or no spiritual exercise in Lot when he followed his uncle Abraham on his journey to Canaan, and if you know the story, you will know the disaster that followed for Lot, his wife, and his family.

Family connections are no substitute for spiritual exercise in the things of God. In the early chapters of Samuel we read of the way that God dealt with the evil sons of Eli, the priest of Israel, and how the child of Hannah, Samuel, was brought into the service of the LORD. In the New Testament we have the example of John Mark and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas disagreed about John Mark's suitability for their second missionary journey, but John Mark was Barnabas's nephew, and Barnabas was determined that he should go with them. In the end, Paul and Barnabas went their separate ways. I think it is telling that we read no more of Barnabas, although we know that John Mark was later used in the service of the Lord. He was the Mark who wrote the Gospel which bears his name.

Earlier on I quoted from Matthew ch. 16, where the Lord Jesus said He would build His church. We know that was consequent on His ascending into Heaven and the subsequent descent of the Holy Spirit upon them. The Lord Jesus Christ is the risen Head of the church, which is His body. [This is something which Paul learned even before his conversion on the way to Damascus. He was persecuting the church, but the Lord's words were, "Why persecutest thou me?"](#) Let us ever remember that as we serve the Lord and His people, it is His church, and not ours. The church is also spoken of as the House of God, and as such, we do well to respect the divine rules of that

House. Those who carry office in the church must fit with the divinely given criteria, and room must be made for those who have God-given gifts.

There is a difference between bearing an office and practising a gift. I cannot explain this any better than what I heard as a younger man, 'an office is a local matter, whereas a gift is universal.' There are those who have been raised up by God, to be elders or deacons amongst His people. You will find the criteria for this work plainly stated in Paul's letter to Timothy (see 1 Timothy ch. 3). Note that oversight always is plural, and no one man should have single authority amongst any group of believers, in any locality. I say in any locality because those who hold these offices among one group of Christians have no such authority elsewhere, in other groups of believers. Gift is quite different, and those to whom God has given gifts, should use these gifts for the benefit of the whole company of believers. Paul writes of these gifts to the Christians at Corinth and Ephesus (see 1 Corinthians ch. 12, Ephesians ch. 4).

We have a wonderful example of 'handing on to the next generation' in the case of Paul and Timothy. Although Paul refers to Timothy as "my son" we know this was in character, "son in the faith" and not in nature (see 1 Timothy 1:2). Although we know very little of Timothy's natural father, we know that both his mother and grandmother were spiritual women (see 2 Timothy ch. 1 v. 5). The second letter of Paul to Timothy is the last of Paul's writings in the Bible record. He wrote of his impending martyrdom, at the hand of Nero, and encouraged Timothy,

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (see ch. 2 vv. 1-2).

Paul was content to have lived a godly life as an example which could be followed, and that Timothy would find 'faithful' men who would continue the Lord's work. I would encourage you to read this final letter of Paul the aged to the young man Timothy and you will see what handing on to the next generation is all about.

May God bless you all.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on Growing Old – Handing on to the next generation, Talk No. T1240.

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.