

Rise Up Before a Hoary Head

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AM Service

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Text:

Our Bible reading today is [Leviticus 19:23-37](#). The book of Leviticus is the **sequel** to the book of Exodus. This book contains series of laws that God gave Israel to show what was involved in being called to be the people of God. God's purpose for calling them to be His people is to make them a holy nation. Holiness is one of the major concepts of this book "Be holy, for I am holy" (11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26).

[Leviticus 19:1](#) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2: Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, **Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.**

[Leviticus 19:23](#) And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. 24: But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD withal. 25: And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God. 26: Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times. 27: Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard. 28: Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD. 29: Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness. 30: Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. 31: Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God. 32: Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD. 33: And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. 34: But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. 35: Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure. 36: Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have: I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. 37: Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I am the LORD.

Our text this morning is [verse 32](#).

[Leviticus 19:32](#) Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

Introduction

We live in an age where **youth is idolized** and **aging is despised**. People want to stay young and are afraid of getting old. Everybody wants to live a long time, but nobody wants to get old. We can see that all around us. In **Hollywood**, in **music**, in **literature** and in **fashions** it is **youth rather than age that is idealized**. Companies make millions of dollars every year selling **anti-aging creams**, **hair tonics**, **vitamins** or **special diets** that claim to add years to your life. There are those who spend their fortune to have **surgery to hide their true age**. They try to deny that they are old. We have become a society which views aging in a very negative light. But when you go to the **Scripture** you will discover that **age or aging is viewed in a very positive way**. According to the **Bible**, **growing old** is not a dreaded destiny, but rather **a blessing and honor**.

Proverbs 16:31 The hoary head [gray hair] is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Here we read that old age is **not a degradation**, but rather it is a **promotion**. There is nothing shameful of being old. God affirms old age as a crown of glory; as **a time of glory and fulfillment**. It's a **time of reward**. So, don't despise the hoary head; that grey hair is the glory of the aged. Both young and old must keep in mind that in the Scripture, God speaks of old age as a blessing. We must see aging as the Bible sees it.

Proverbs 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

God speaks very positively about the elderly. Old age is a blessing and an honor and, according to the Bible, **the elderly people are to be regarded with respect**.

Leviticus 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

The Bible does not consider it disrespectful to identify an old man as an old man. But respectfully the Bible calls an old man what he is, an old man. Honor the face of the old man. Be respectful in the presence of an old man.

Brian Huizinga observes, *"It's almost paradoxical because the hoary head is one of the indications in the creation that man has fallen into sin and all things are moving towards death. Things are not getting younger and better, but things get older and they die, and the hoary head is a testimony to that. And yet God so orders the creation and so orders even the effects of the curse upon creation to serve His purposes and He has a purpose with the hoary head and His purpose is to make one who has hoary head the object of respect and honor. So that the hoary head is not only a testimony that all things are moving towards death but it is a crown of glory. Even the ungodly pagans who know not God and deny Him, teach their children, many of them do, to respect the elderly. Then how much more ought that not be the case with God's children where the elderly does not only have a hoary head but a heart of wisdom in Jesus Christ."*

The elderly must be shown the respect which is due them and that is today's sermon. As I have always said in the past, we are here first to worship our God. However, we read in ...

Romans 13:7 Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.

The Bible teaches to give love, respect, and honor where it's due and that's what we are going to do this morning. This morning I especially want to remind us to honor and respect the elderly, in three headings, namely, the **Mandate** to Honor the Aged, the **Manner** of Honoring the Aged, and the **Motive** in Honoring the Aged.

I - The Mandate to Honor the Aged

Let's look at the mandate or command closely. What is the command?

Leviticus 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

Here is a clear command to respect and honor for those who are older. It says, "rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man."

Honoring and respecting the elderly is **not just an Old Testament law** that has no relevance for the New Testament believers. No, this command is **very practical and applicable even in our day**. We see this command applied in the New Testament when Peter exhorts in ...

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, **submit yourselves unto the elder**. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Peter is not just talking about the elders in church office, he is also talking about the **elders of age**. Clearly then, this old testament law still applies today to the New Testament believers, honor the aged.

This text is about old people, but this text is specially for us younger people. One of the things we need to teach our children is to honor the aged. It is to our peril as a family and as a nation if we do not teach the children to have respect to the elderly.

Why are the elderly singled-out?

Why are the old people set apart by God to be respected? Why would God single out older people for special respect? Two reasons I want us to consider, namely, first, their **weakness** and second, their **strength**.

1. Their Weakness

First of all, we have to honor and respect because the elderly is oftentimes weak and vulnerable. Being old has many challenges. The older generation represents a people who have special needs.

Someone has said, you know you are growing old when:

"Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off. You quit trying to hold your stomach in, no matter who walks into the room. You finally get it all together and then you can't remember where you put it. You try to straighten out the wrinkles in your socks and discover you

aren't wearing any. You know all the answers, but nobody asks you the questions. Everything hurts and what doesn't hurt, doesn't work."

"Growing old isn't for faint hearted!" A lot of the young couldn't handle it!

God cares for those who are weak, those who are vulnerable in our society.

Leviticus 19:14 Thou shalt not curse the **deaf**, nor put a stumblingblock before the **blind**, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

We know that the deaf and the blind are vulnerable and defenseless in a society. The reason for the special respect is because they are in need of special care. We are to respect and care for the older people because oftentimes **they are weaker, defenseless, and vulnerable** in our society.

Again, and again we read in the Scripture that **God has His special eye and care for the weak and the defenseless.**

Hosea 14:3 Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

In God, the fatherless [orphan] finds mercy.

Psalms 68:5 A father of the fatherless, and a judge [defender] of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.

Psalms 146:9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

God protects foreigners and helps the fatherless and the widow.

Psalms 147:3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

The Lord heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

The stranger, the widow, and the orphan are constantly presented in the Scripture as **objects of God's compassion and care.** Every vulnerable individual demand our care, for it is through ministering to vulnerable individuals that God's grace is most clearly revealed. When the helpless are relieved, God is honored. Therefore, honoring the elderly honors the Lord our God.

2. Their Strength

The second reason why we are to honor and respect the older people is because they have special strength. It is true that older people have special needs, but older people are also people with special strength. **With age comes strength and what strength do they have?** Please turn to ...

Job 12:12 With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.

Wisdom is found with the elderly and understanding comes with those who have lived a long time. The strength they have is the **strength of wisdom.** With age often comes **wealth of experience** and therefore wisdom.

Many of them have **years of experience** in **raising children**, in **laboring** in workplace, in **servicing God** in the church. They have years and years of experience in every facet of life, at **home**, at **church**, at **work**, at **school**, in all kinds of **relationships** and from all of these experiences **they have gain wisdom and understanding**.

We need their life's wisdom. The elderly may not be able to keep up with all the latest technology, but their **down-to-earth wisdom** in dealing with life's ups and downs is **priceless**. They can give valuable information that **cannot be found** in **books** or in **computer programs**. From the experiences of the elderly, the next generation learns the **faithfulness** and **goodness of God**.

So why special respect? Because they are now weak, they need our protection and our care and our love and our respect. They also have special strength, the strength of wisdom. And that strength is to be **valued**, that strength is to be **remembered** and **respected** and **tapped into**.

II - The Manner of Honoring the Aged

Honor is an invisible attitude. It is a spiritual attitude of the heart. But it is more than an attitude that God is calling for. He is not just calling for an attitude. He is not just calling for us to be mindful of this. He is calling for us to **demonstrate this in a visible way**.

[Leviticus 19:32](#) *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.*

We are taught in this verse that the honor and respect for the aged is not just an attitude, to be felt, the honor and respect for the aged is also to be demonstrated. One way to demonstrate our honor and respect to the elderly is to **stand up** and **recognize their presence**. Now the way that respect is demonstrated from culture to culture but the point is that even **in our behaviors we reveal our respect for age and experience**.

I believe it's proper manner when grandpa or grandma arrives and walks into the room that the children **stop whatever they are doing** and **stand up, greet, hug or bless** them. And when grandpa or grandma leaves a gathering at our home the children again stops whatever they are doing and stand up and **say goodbye** to indicate the respect and honor they have in their hearts.

There are other ways we can show honor and respect to the older people, namely:

1. Care for them

Take care of the elderly. That's the way to show respect to the elderly. Meet their needs. To have an old man with physical needs and not to meet those needs is to disrespect him.

2. Address them with respect

Some young people speak to older people as if they are their peers as if there is no distinction whatsoever. How we speak to older people, how we speak about them demonstrate our respect or lack of respect.

3. Listen to them

When the elderly speaks listen. Listen to them and their counsels. Take a genuine interest in their past life. Ask them for their advise. Give ear to their observations regarding all matters of life. Honor them in your heart and in your actions.

III - The Motivation for Honoring the Aged

What should be the motive for honoring and respecting the aged? The motive for honoring the elderly is not so that we can be liked by them, or so that relationships can be better. Rather, it is a **God-centered reason**. It is because we fear God.

Leviticus 19:32 Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: **I am the LORD.**

Who is going to listen to this command? Who is going to submit to this? The people who will listen and take this command seriously are the **people who fear Jehovah and to whom that name matters**. To the degree that you fear God, there will be reverence before the elders and elderly. And when you don't have that respect, you are probably missing that fear of God.

There is a **close connection** between **respect for our elders** and **reverence for Jehovah**. When you honor the elderly, you are honoring God. To show respect to the elderly is to show respect to God. And **any society that fails to honor God will eventually fail to honor the elderly and vice versa**.

Does God's authority matter to you? Do you love the LORD? Do you reverence Him? Do you fear Him? If you do, you will hear the call to honor and respect the hoary head.

Closing Thoughts

Let me close by speaking ...

To the Children

Children you have one duty, honor and respect those who are older than you are, specially the grey headed. Honor them in the way you address them. Honor them by listening to them. Spend time with them and ask them questions. Ask for their advise.

To the Parents

It's the duty of parents to teach their children to honor and respect the elderly and being a good example in respecting the elderly. Parents must teach their children to be respectful. Parents must train their children to honor the elderly, beginning with honoring their own parents. If we fail to instruct our youth, we insure that ours is truly a dying society that rushes nearer, ever nearer, destruction brought on through our own arrogance.

To the Church

This message is to remind us as a church **not to put the elderly on a shelf**. They have a **valuable place** and **role** in God's kingdom. They may be weak but **they can model** to others how **God's grace sustains them**.

To the Elderly Among Us

There is an implied duty for the elderly. God commanded us younger generation to honor and respect the aged. That is our duty. But the elderly among us have a duty also, that is **to humbly receive the honor God has assigned for you**. Receive the honor and respect. **Don't be offended** when the youth say go first to the food line or take the better seat. **Don't be annoyed** when family members offer help and care for you because you are body and health is diminishing. Don't be offended as if your dignity has been taken away.

I pray that Grace & Truth BBC would be place where older people are respected and honored. A place where the elderly are honored and respect on the account of their weakness and their strength as well. A place where the elderly are valued and recognized and loved.

I pray that Grace & Truth BBC would be place where young people and not so young people would say, *"You know what I want to learn from them."* A place where we mix and mingle regardless of the age, and spend time together and where we learn from each other. That's God's design for the church. May the Lord produce that here. May it start in our homes and may it flood our church life.

AMEN!