

THE OLD MAN'S SERMON

NO. 1256

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1875
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not;
until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation,
and thy power to every one that is to come.”*
Psalm 71:17-18

I EXPECT during the present week to have the pleasure of preaching at Kettering, to celebrate the centenary of the ministry in that place of Mr. Toller and his father. My esteemed friend Mr. Toller has for about fifty-five years proclaimed the Gospel of the grace of God to the same people, and with the forty-five years of his father's previous pastorate, the century is completed.

Having this very pleasant task before me, I have been led to consider the subject of old age, and especially the old age of believers, and have concluded that *“the reminiscences of an old man”* would furnish us a suitable topic for this morning's discourse.

I was the more led to choose the subject because on Sabbath week the children and young people will have a claim upon the preacher, since that day has been selected by the Sunday School Union for special prayer. To balance accounts, let us give this morning's service to our grave and reverend seniors.

David has here spoken as an aged man, and what he has said has been echoed by thousands of venerable believers. His experience of the past, his prayer for the present, and his aspiration for the future, have all occurred to others who are his equals in years, and those of us who are in middle life will ere long be glad to say, “Amen” thereto.

“O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.” David in this passage may be regarded as the model of an aged believer converted in early life. And we feel quite safe in taking all his expressions and putting them into the mouths of veteran soldiers of the cross.

I. The first thing we shall dwell upon this morning will be HIS SCHOLARSHIP, *or a good beginning*. “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth.” *The psalmist was an instructed believer*. He had not merely been saved, but taught—conversion had led to instruction.

I call the attention of all young Christians to this. How desirable it is not merely that you should be forgiven your sins, and justified by faith in Christ Jesus, and that your hearts should be renewed by the operations of the Holy Ghost, but that you should go to school to Jesus, and take His yoke upon you and learn of Him.

Do you not know that this is the good part which Mary chose, and which the Lord declared should not be taken away from her? She chose to sit at His feet to learn of Him. Do not suppose that to be saved from hell is everything, you need also to be instructed in righteousness. If you seek to know the Lord more and more, it will save you from a thousand snares, cause you to grow in grace, and enable you to be useful. That will be a fruitful old age which was preceded by an instructed youth.

We ought to know the truth and understand it, for if we do not we shall always be weak in the faith. That David was exceedingly well-instructed is clear from his Psalms, which contain a mine of doctrine and a wealth of experience, never surpassed even by other inspired writings. If one had no other book than the Psalms to study, he might, by the blessing of God's Spirit, become one of the wisest of men.

Aim, then, my brethren to be disciples now, that in your old age you may look back with joy on the days spent in heavenly learning.

All his instruction the psalmist traced to his God. “O God, *thou* hast taught me.” He had entered Christ's College as a scholar. Most wisely had he chosen to learn of Him who has infinite wisdom to impart, and divine skill in communicating it. The Lord not only endeavors to teach, but He does do so. He knows how to make His children learn, for He speaks to the heart, and teaches us to profit.

“O God, *thou* hast taught me.” What a blessed thing it is when we are fully convinced by the Holy Spirit that to learn anything aright we must be taught of God. Too many appear to fancy that everything they need to know they can discover for themselves. They think they can work it out by their own thoughts, or at any rate the profound learning of their favorite authors will carry them through.

My brother, you who have grown grey in your Master's service, I am sure you have learned to mistrust your own understanding, and are glad to receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child. You know by experience that all you have ever learned apart from God has been a lesson of sorrow or of folly. You have obtained no true light except from the great Father of lights.

No heavenly truths are learned aright till by the Holy Ghost they are burnt into the soul. Blessed are those who have gone to school to such a Master—they shall be among the wise who shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.

The Lord had taught David in part by His Word, for we find David delighting in the Scriptures, and meditating in them both day and night. He taught him also by His ministers. He gathered no little instruction from Samuel, and he learned some pointed lessons from Nathan. While Gad, the king's seer, no doubt, also ministered to his building up. God's children are willing to be taught by God's servants.

He had also been instructed by the Holy Spirit—many a precious truth had been communicated to him in the quiet of the sheep walks, or in the solitary caverns of the hills—and even when he had become a king, he was awakened in the night watches that he might hear the voice of the Lord his God.

Moreover, the Lord taught him by providence. He learned much from his shepherd's crook, much from his sling and stone, much from the hatred of Saul, much from the love of Jonathan. He must have learned much afterwards of his own heart from his own trials, follies, and sins. And he must have seen much of man's worthlessness from the ingratitude of Absalom, the treachery of Ahithophel, the brutality of Joab, and the blasphemy of Shimei.

His whole life was a source of education. Whether he stood on the hill Mizar or traversed the valley of Baca, whether he exulted in green pastures or sunk in the deeps where all God's waves and billows went over him, whether he sang a hallelujah or chanted a *miserere*, everything was training him for a yet nobler existence.

Hence he could say to the most High, “Thou hast taught me.” O beloved Christian friends, in looking back can you not see how everything has been instructive to you when you have been willing to learn? What a school have some of us passed through—a school of trial and a school of love.

We have sat on the hard floor of discipline, we have felt the rod of correction, and on the other hand, our eyes have sparkled with delight as we have studied the illuminated book of fellowship, and peered into the secrets of the Lord, which is with them that fear Him. In us has been fulfilled that ancient covenant promise, “All thy children shall be taught of the LORD.”

David also had the privilege of beginning early. “O God, *thou* hast taught me *from my youth.*” I was a scholar in Your infant class. I was put to You to learn my letters, and when I learned to spell out Your name as my Savior and Father, it was Your grace which taught it to me. All true learning begins at Christ's feet, and it is well to be there in our boyhood.

If you would be a good scholar, you must be a young scholar. David felt that he needed to be instructed of God from his youth, for in one of his psalms he says, “Remember not the sins of my youth, and my former transgressions.” So that even pious David had sins of his youth to mourn over, and therefore needed as well as others to learn the way of holiness when young.

The dire necessity which the foolishness of nature has laid upon us from our earliest days is met by early grace. My aged brethren, I would urge you at this moment to bless the Lord for the grace which in early days saved many of you from falling into grievous sin.

The sin which the psalmist mourned over, he was enabled by divine teaching to master. He says himself, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word," and so David had done, and hence his early life was marked by great purity and simplicity of character, because he had so well been taught of God.

Specially had he been taught to *trust* his God, for in the fifth verse of this psalm he says, "Thou art my hope, O LORD God, thou art my trust from my youth." And being so taught he had practically proved his faith, for while he was yet in his youth he smote the uncircumcised Philistine, and in the name of God delivered Israel.

Blessed is that young man who practically shows by daring deeds that he is a disciple of Jesus. Blessed is that old man who in looking back confesses that he needed teaching from his youth up, but also rejoices that he received instruction from the Lord, and was led into the way of righteousness.

Further, notice David tells us *he kept to his studies*. He says, "O God, thou hast taught me *from* my youth," which implies that God had continued to teach him, and so indeed He had. The learner had not sought another school, nor had the Master turned off His pupil. Some make slight progress because they seem to begin well, but afterwards turn aside to folly. They profess to be taught of God at one time, but they grow weary of the plain Gospel of Jesus, and resort to heresy-mongers and inventors of strange doctrines.

Good is it for the heart to be established in the truth, and to yield itself to no teacher but the Lord. Venerable brother, I hope you can say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth. I have not bowed my soul to every wind of doctrine, and made myself as the bulrush, which yields to every passing breath of air. But I have been steadfast, unmovable, holding fast the Word of truth."

It is equally clear that *he was still learning*. The oldest saint still goes to school to the Lord Jesus. Oh, how little we know when we know most. The wisest saints are those who most readily confess their folly. The man who knows everything is the man who knows nothing. The man who cannot learn any more is the man who has never learned anything aright. To know Christ and the power of His resurrection creates an insatiable thirst after a still closer acquaintance with Him. Our eager desire is yet more fully "to know him."

I half wish that I could leave the pulpit, and that some venerable brother could come forward and tell you how God began with him, and repeat the first lessons that he learned. I should like to hear him tell how God has had patience with him and has taught him still—how sometimes he has had to smart under the rod ere he could be made to learn at all—and yet the Lord has been gentle with him.

I should like "such an one as Paul the aged" to tell you how by everything that has happened, bad and good, bright and dark, his education has been carried on. And I should like him to tell you how glad he is to continue to be a learner, though now so far advanced in life. The best instructed of our elder brethren are those who most earnestly cry, "What I know not teach thou me," and "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Though my venerable friend has earned unto himself a good degree, he still keeps to his old book, and his old Master. Though now able to teach others also, he is none the less a disciple, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Yea, he is all the more teachable because of what he already knows.

Thus, brethren, we have seen that the model of aged believers is an instructed saint, who owes all he knows to divine teaching, who began to learn early, and has persevered in his sacred studies even to this day—

*"'Twas Thine, O Lord, to train and try
My spirit from my youth;
And to this hour I glorify
The wonders of Thy truth."*

II. Secondly, pass on to consider HIS OCCUPATION.

His scholarship was a good beginning, his occupation was *a good continuance*—"Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." This was David's chief employment. It is true he had other work to do, for he was at first a shepherd. He then became a royal harper, afterwards grew into a warrior, and at last climbed to a throne. Still his life's main bent and object was to magnify the Lord by declaring His wondrous works.

You and I, brethren, have each one his calling, and if it be a lawful calling let us abide in it, and let us not dream that it would honor God for us to leave our daily occupations upon pretence of serving Him in a more spiritual way by living upon other people.

Still our earthly vocation is but the shell of our heavenly calling, which is the kernel of our life's pursuit. Our temporal business must be subservient to our spiritual business, and we must declare the glory of God in some way or other. David magnified the Lord by his Psalms. How sweetly has he therein declared God's ways of mercy and of faithfulness!

He glorified God by his life, especially by those heroic deeds which made all Israel know the mighty works which God could do by a feeble but trustful man. He no doubt often declared the wondrous works of God in private converse with believers and unbelievers, by narrating his personal experience of the Lord's mercies.

You and I, if we have been to God's school, must follow the same occupation. Some of us can preach. Let us be diligent in it. Others of you teach in the Sunday school—I beseech you put your whole hearts into that blessed work. All of you can by written letters or private conversation, and especially by consistent lives, declare the wondrous works of God, and make men know the glories of the God of grace.

Let us be eager in this sacred work. Men do not care to know their God, but we must not allow them to be ignorant. Tell them of that love of His against which they daily offend, and of His readiness to forgive their provocations. Publish and proclaim salvation by grace. It is sweet in old age to remember that you did this.

Notice here, dear friends, that *David had chosen a divine subject*. "Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." *God's* works he had declared, not man's. He had not talked of what man could do or had done. Note verse sixteen—"I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Neither the virtues of saints, nor the prerogatives of priests, nor the infallibility of pontiffs, nor anything of the sort, had degraded the psalmist's lips. But those lips had reserved themselves for the glory of God alone. "My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long."

We ought to speak of what God has done in creation, providence, and grace—and especially should we point out the marvelous nature of those works—for there is a wonder about them all. Truly, brethren, here is a great subject for us—the wonders of electing love, the wonders of redeeming grace, the wonders of the Holy Spirit's converting power, the wonders of sanctification, the wonders of sin conquered, and of grace implanted. Such wonders never cease.

Wonders of grace to God belong, and it should be your business and mine, in the spirit of holy reverence, to tell others what God has done, that we may set them wondering and adoring too. David had a blessed subject, a subject of which the main point was the blending of righteousness with salvation.

Did you notice the fifteenth verse, "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day"? That is the great Christian doctrine—*medulla theologiae*, the very pith and marrow of theology—the atonement in which grace and justice unite in the sacrifice of Jesus.

O beloved, I could wish to have no other subject to speak upon, and to have my tongue touched with a live coal from off the altar to preach of substitution only. I desire to speak of it first and foremost, and beyond all else. I would show forth daily how God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.

How He smites for sin, and yet smites not the sinner. How He is severe, relaxing none of the penalty, and yet laying none of the penalty upon the guilty, because The Guiltless One has borne it all. Make it, dear friends, the occupation of your lives to instruct men in this saving truth. Teach them this if nothing else. If there are some doctrines you cannot understand, yet get a grip of this one. If some are too high for you, yet let this be your daily theme—Christ crucified—at whose cross righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

This was David's occupation. My aged brethren in Christ, this has been your occupation also, and you do not regret it. You only wish you had been more diligent in it.

Now notice that while David's subject was divine, it had also been *uniform*. He says, "*Hitherto* have I declared thy wondrous works." It is a sad thing when a good man turns aside to error, even if it is but for a little season.

Some ministers have preached motley. I should think they themselves do not know what they have taught, for they have gone from one line of thought to another, and contradicted themselves over and over again. Beware of being men given to change, ready to catch every new disease. I confess I feel an admiration for a man who can say, "What I taught in my youth, I teach in my old age. That which was my hope and confidence when first the Spirit of God opened my mouth—that and no other—is my hope and confidence still."

As men grow in years, they ought to think more deeply, to understand more clearly, and to speak with greater confidence. And it is their wisdom to correct many errors of detail which occurred through the immaturity of their early days. But still it is a great thing to hold fundamental truth from the very first.

There are not two Christs nor two Gospels—if there be another Gospel it is not another, but there be some that trouble us. Oh, my brother, if the Lord has taught you from your youth, abide in that which you have learned—hold to it now that your hair is grey. Let us see that "the Old Guard dies but never surrenders."

Even we, who are younger than you are, have resolved to abide in the grand old truth. Our flag was nailed to the mast long ago. Surely the veterans will say the same. All my salvation and all my desire are centered in the covenant of grace, and the Gospel of redemption by the blood of Jesus. And as for novelties of doctrine, I have one answer for them all.

*"Should all the forms which men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."*

That is good word of permanence—*hitherto*. "Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." Hitherto also have our aged fathers come, holding still the things most surely believed among us.

But dear friends, notice that *the style which David used was very commendable*. "Hitherto have I declared," says he. Now by declaration I understand something positive, plain, and personal. David's teaching about his God had not been with an "if," and a "but," and a "may be," but it had been, "Thus and thus, saith the LORD."

He had declared the truth openly. His teaching had not been misty and foggy, so that his people could make what they liked out of it according to their tastes. Neither had it been mystical, metaphysical, transcendental, and philosophic—but he had declared it, cleared it, explained it, and brought it into prominent notice—so that he who ran might read it.

He had also declared it as known to himself, and certified by his own experience. It is a blessed thing to give a personal tinge to our testimony by saying, "Thus and thus have I experienced, and so has the Lord dealt with me." Herein will lie much of the interest of our testimony.

Dear brother, you who have attained to a ripe old age, I trust you are able in looking back to say, "Yes, I have spoken honestly for God from my inmost heart, and therefore I have spoken with decision,

proving by my personal experience the truth of the divine promises. God has always been true to me, and though some may think me an egotist I can bear the censure, for I am unable to restrain myself from uttering my grateful acknowledgments. Surely if I did not speak, the stones would cry out. I must proclaim the faithfulness of the living God.”

David's style had in it very much of holy awe and loving devotion, for he says, “thy *wondrous* works,” which shows that he himself had wondered while he spoke. I like to hear a good man talk of God's love, feeling it to be too deep for him, speaking of it with tears, as though it overcame him—telling his tale as though it were more marvelous to him than he could make it appear to his hearers.

David had done his work in the spirit of adoring wonder and grateful love. For, my brethren, he had ever before him this one object—to make God great in men's thoughts. May I ask you who are getting on in years, are you making this your one occupation? And if you happen to be teachers or preachers, do you teach the salvation of God with the sole aim of glorifying God?

Oh, it must come to this, for all divine service which is not rendered with this motive is unacceptable and idle work. If we could preach with the tongues of men and of angels so as to surpass Apollos, if our object were to shine in the eyes of men, our preaching would be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. If there be any mixture in the motive, dead flies are in the ointment of the apothecary, and it gives forth an ill savor.

But if this be our one sole desire, to glorify God by making men see what a great and blessed God He is, our labor will be as the incense upon the golden altar. Upon such service we shall be able to look back in our old age with thankfulness.

How is it with you, my brother, my sister, in reviewing the past? And how are matters with you who are in the prime of your strength—are you about your Father's business, and living for God in all that you do? Oh, then, happy shall you be when grey hairs shall adorn your heads with a crown of glory, for the silver light shall not rest on your heads only, but shall cast its sheen of gladness upon your hearts also, as you remember that hitherto you have declared His wondrous works.

III. Thus I pass on to the third thing in the text, namely, HIS PRAYER, which was *a good omen*—“*Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.*”

What a plaintive prayer it is. It shows you, brethren, that David was not ashamed of *his former reliance*.

He felt that he should not have come so far if God had not led him. He saw his absolute dependence upon God in the past, the necessity which had always existed for his entire reliance on the divine omnipotence. I hope that from our youth we have known the necessity of dependence upon God, but I am certain that dependence is a growing feeling.

Growing Christians think themselves nothing. Full-grown Christians think themselves less than nothing. Good men are like ships—the fuller they are, the lower they sink in the stream. The more grace a man has, the more he complains of his want of grace. Grace is not a kind of food which creates a sense of fullness, but as I have heard of some meats that you can eat them till you are hungry, so it is with grace—the more you receive, the more you long for.

David knew the secret springs from which all his blessings had flowed, and he pleads with the Lord never to stop the divine fountain of all-sufficiency, or he must faint and die.

This proves, dear friends, that David did not imagine that past grace could suffice for the present. Past experience is like the old manna, it breeds worms and stinks if it be relied upon. The moment a man begins to pride himself on the grace he used to have six years ago, you may depend upon it, he has very little now.

We want new grace every day. The presence of God with me yesterday will not suffice for the present moment—I must have grace now. David acknowledged his *present dependence*, and it was wise to do so. Men always stumble when they try to walk with their eyes turned behind them.

It is very remarkable that all the falls, as far as I remember, recorded in Scripture, are those of old men. This should be a great warning to us who think we are getting wise and experienced. Lot and

Judah, and Eli, and Solomon, and Asa were all advanced in years when they were found faulty before the Lord. Cool passions are no guarantees against fiery sins, unless grace has cooled them rather than the decay of nature.

There was great need for David to say, "O God, forsake me not," and his own case proved it. I have heard say by those who drive much, that horses oftener fall at the bottom of the hill than anywhere else. Where the driver thinks he need not hold them up any longer, down they go.

And thus many men have borne temptation bravely for years—and just when the trial was over, and they reckoned that they were safe—they turned aside to crooked ways and grieved the Lord. You are greatly surprised, you would have believed it of anybody sooner than of them, but so it is. Take this, then, as a caution, lest we spoil a lifelong reputation by one wretched act of sin. My very heart cries, "O God, forsake me not."

The psalmist saw that many enemies were watching him, and therefore he pleaded, "Forsake me not." He had many temptations to grow weary in his Master's service, and he prayed, "Forsake me not." He felt also the natural decay of his physical force, and he cried, "My strength faileth," and therefore he pleaded, "Forsake me not."

*"With years oppressed, with sorrows worn,
Dejected, harassed, sick, forlorn,
To Thee, O God, I pray;
To Thee my withered hands arise,
To Thee I lift these failing eyes;
Oh, cast me not away!"*

The psalmist by this prayer confessed *his undeservingness*. He felt that for his sins God might well leave him. Hence that prayer in the fifty-first Psalm, "Cast me not away from thy presence; take not thy Holy Spirit from me." But he humbly resolved not to be deserted. He could not bear it. He held his God with eagerness, and cried in agony, "O God, forsake me not." His heart was desperately set upon holding to his one hope and consolation, and so he pleaded as one who pleads for life itself.

You now have the prayer before you—what think you, brethren—will the Lord answer it? You who are feeling your strength fail through old age have been praying, "O God, forsake me not." What think you, will the Lord answer your prayer? Ay, that He will! It is not possible for Him to do otherwise. Do you think it is like our Lord to leave a man because he is growing old? Would any of us do it?

Son, would you cast off your father because he totters about the house? Brother, would you leave your elder brother because he is now aged and infirm? Do we any of us, as long as we have human hearts in our bosom, pitilessly desert the aged? Oh no, and God is far better than we are. And He will not despise His worn-out servants.

The feeble moanings of the most afflicted and infirm are heard by Him, not with weariness, but with pity. Do you think the Lord will turn off His old servants? Would you do so? Among men it is common enough to leave poor old people to shift for themselves. The soldier who has spent the prime of his life in his country's service has been left to beg by the roadside, or to die of want.

Even the saviors of a nation have been suffered in their old age to pine in penury. How often have kings and princes cast off their most faithful servants and left them naked to their enemies! When time has wrinkled the handsome face, and bowed the erect figure, the old man has no longer found a place in the throng of courtiers.

But the Lord deals not so. The King of kings casts not off His veteran soldiers, nor His old courtiers, but He indulges them with peculiar favors. We have a proverb that old wine and old friends are best, and truly we need not look far to see that the oldest saints are frequently the best esteemed by the Lord. He did not forsake Abraham when he was well-stricken in years, nor Isaac when he was blind, nor Jacob when he worshipped upon the top of his staff.

Who among us would turn off an old servant? Some skinflints who have no sense of shame might do so, but they are a disgrace to their kind. I know my Lord and Master will never act as they do, for He is love, and His mercy endures forever. If He has blessed us in youth and middle age, He will not change His ways, and desert us in our declining days. No, blessed be His name, at eventide it will be light, and He will show Himself more tender than ever to us. For He has said, "Even to old age I am he, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you."

No, my brethren, Jesus will not forget his old Barzillais, nor though, like Peter, others should gird us and take us whither we would not, He will not turn away His face from us, but will love us to the end.

Why, brethren, if the Lord had meant to cast us off would He not have done so long ago? If He wanted occasion for discharging us from His service, has He not had plenty? My Lord has had reason enough to send me packing hundreds of times, if He had willed to do so. He has not waited all these years to pick a quarrel with you at the last, I am sure, for He might have justly removed you from His household years ago.

If He had meant to destroy you, would He have shown you such things as He has done? If He meant to leave you, would He not have left you in your troubles twenty years ago? He has spent so much patience and pains, and trouble over you that He surely means to go through with it. Why should He not? Has He begun to build and is He not able to finish?

Trembling friend, remember that your vessel has been steered across the ocean of life for seventy years, and surely you can trust the Lord to pilot you for the few years which remain. Did you say that you are nearly eighty, and do you still doubt your God? How long do you expect to live? Another ten years? Cannot you trust Him for that? Why, you will not be here so long as that, in all probability, and since the Lord has been good to you so long, do you doubt now?

Oh, do not so. It is almost Saturday night, the week's work is nearly done, and you will soon enjoy the everlasting Sabbath—can you not rely upon your God till the day break and the shadows flee away? "Ah," say you, "you are only a young man, it is very well for you to talk." I know it. I know it. And yet I believe that when I grow old I shall be able to talk as I do now, and even more confidently, for I trust I shall then be able to say, "He who taught me from my youth and kept me to this day, will not now let me go."

Oh, my brethren, though you cried in prayer, "O God, forsake me not," do not sink so low as to imagine that He can forsake you, for that were to mistrust His royal Word, wherein He said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

IV. Our last point is this, here is HIS WISH, or a *good ending*.

"Forsake me not *till I have showed thy strength unto this generation and thy power to every one that is to come.*" He had spent a lifetime in declaring God's Gospel, but he wanted to do it once more. Aged saints are loth to cease from active service. Many of them are like old John Newton, who, when he was too feeble to walk up the pulpit stairs of St. Mary Woolnoth Parish church, was carried up to his place and preached on still.

His friends said, "Really, Mr. Newton, you are so feeble, you ought to give over," and he said, "What? Shall the old African blasphemer ever leave off preaching the grace of his Master as long as there is breath in his body? No, never." It is harder work to leave off than to go on, for the love of Christ constrains us still, and burns with young flame in an aged heart.

So here the good man pines to show forth once more God's strength. I think I hear somebody say to the aged man, "You are very unfit to show forth God's strength, for by reason of years your strength is failing." But such a speech would be foolish, for the very man to show forth the Lord's strength is the man who has none of his own.

It is no small thing to be in a condition to need great help, and so to be fitted to receive it, and qualified to illustrate what great things divine power can accomplish. My aged friend, your weakness will serve as a foil to set forth the brightness of divine strength. The "old man eloquent," feels that if he could bear one more testimony, everybody would know it was not the strength of his natural spirit or his

fine juvenile constitution which upheld him. If he spoke up for his Maker, all men would say, "That feeble old man who testified so bravely for his Lord is himself the best of all testimonies to the power of divine grace, for we see how it strengthens him."

Moreover, he thought that if he witnessed for his Lord the young people would note the strength of divine grace which could last out so many years—they would see that many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it. They would see the strength of God's pardoning mercy in blotting out his sins so long, and the power of God's faithfulness in remaining true to His servant, even to the end. Because of all this he eagerly desired to bear one more testimony.

And do you notice the congregation he wished to address? He would testify to the generation that was growing up around him. He wished to make known God's power to his immediate neighbors and to their children, so that the light might be handed on to other generations. This should be on the mind of all who are going off the stage of action—they should think of those who are to come after them, and pray for them and help them.

The aged man's thoughts should be fixed upon the spiritual legacies which he will leave. And as good old Jacob gathered up his feet in the bed, and then divided his blessing among his sons, so should the venerable believer distribute benedictions. Your work is almost done, it only remains to leave behind you a monument by which you may be remembered.

Marble and brass will perish, but the truth will remain. Set up a memorial of faithful testimony. Not much longer will you mingle with the sons of men. Your seat will be empty, and the place which knows you today will know you no more. Hand on, then, the blessed treasure of the Gospel. You die, but the cause of God must not. Speak now, so that when you are gone it may be said of you, "He, being dead, yet speaketh."

Call your children and your grandchildren together and tell them what a good God you have served. Or if you have no such dear ones, speak to your neighbors and your friends, or write it down that other eyes may read it when yours are glazed in death. Reach out your hand to the ages yet to come, and present them with the pearl of great price.

Pray God to enable you to set your mark upon the coming generation, and then set about winning youth to Jesus by a cheerful, bold, unhesitating witness to His love and power. Willing to go, we all ought to be, but we ought scarcely to desire departure till we have seen the interests of the cause of God secured for coming time.

If there is one more soul to be saved, one more heart to be comforted, one more jewel to be gathered for the Redeemer's crown, you will say, dear friend, I am sure, "Let me wait till my full day's work is done."—

***"Happy if with my last breath
I may but lisp thy name,
Preach thee to all, and say in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"***

With this last practical thought I send away my venerable brethren and sisters, asking them to take care that their eventide shall be made to glow with the special light of usefulness by their abundant witness-bearing.

I would urge the Lord's veterans to yet more valorous deeds. If, like David, you have slain the lion and the bear, and the Philistine when you were young, up, man, and do another deed of daring, for the Lord lives still, and His people have need of you. Though your joints are rather rusty, and your limbs can hardly bear you to the battlefield, yet limp to the conflict, for the lame take the prey.

He who helped you when you were but a youth and ruddy, will help you now though you are old and infirm—and who knows what you may do yet! One of the finest paintings I ever saw to move one's soul

was the picture of old Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, leading the way in an attack at sea upon the enemies of the Republic.

He was far past the usual age of man, and blind, and yet, when the efforts of others failed to save his country, he became the leader, and was the first to board the ships of the enemy. The young men felt that they could not hold back when they saw the heroic conduct of the blind, grey-bearded man. His brave example seemed to say, "Soldiers of Venice, will you ever turn your backs?" And the response was worthy of the challenge.

Oh, my honored brethren, reverend for your years, show us your metal. Let the young ones see how victories are won. Quit yourselves like men, and let us see how he who is washed in the blood of Jesus would not hesitate to shed his own blood in the Redeemer's cause. Your zeal will stimulate us, your courage nerve us, and we, too, will be valiant for the Lord God of Israel.

So may God's Spirit work in you and in us. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 71

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 71 (SONG I), 71 (SONG II), 733

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.