

# On Growing Old Successfully

by J.R. Miller

---

*Living a true and worthy life from youth up, and sowing good seeds for a golden harvest, is the key to a successful and beautiful old age.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 92:12, Proverbs 16:31

**Topics:** "Aging Gracefully", "Purpose in Old Age"

---

## Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of growing old successfully, warning that old age carries its own unique perils, just as youth does. He illustrates how many individuals who seem strong may fall due to unresolved issues from their past, and he cautions against the temptations of pride and complacency that can arise in later years. Miller encourages the elderly to remain active and engaged, recognizing that their contributions are still valuable and necessary, and to continue living with purpose and faith until the very end. He advocates for a life of integrity and service, suggesting that the quality of one's old age is a reflection of the seeds sown throughout life. Ultimately, he inspires a vision of old age as a time of beauty, wisdom, and continued growth.

---

## Transcript

A great deal of advice is given to young people. Sermons are preached to them. Books are written for them, filled with counsels. No doubt the young need wise advice, solemn preaching, and paternal counsel. The world has many dangers for youth. Besides, character is formed into permanence, in the early days.

But youth is not the only stage of life which has perils; each period has its own. A great many men break down at mid-life. Many whose youth and early manhood gave brightest promise--fail utterly in some crisis when at their very strongest. Not all the wrecks of life occur in the early days. A majestic tree fell at its prime--fell on a calm evening, when there was scarcely a breath of air stirring. It had withstood a century of storms, and now was broken off by a zephyr. The secret was disclosed in its falling. A boy's hatchet had been struck into it when it was a tender sapling. The wound had been grown over and hidden away under exuberant life--but it had never healed. There at the heart of the tree it stayed, a spot of decay, ever eating a little farther and deeper into the trunk, until at last the tree was rotted through, and fell of its own weight, when it seemed to be at its best. So do many lives fall--when they seem to be at their strongest, because some sin or fault of youth has left its wounding and its consequent weakness at the heart. For many years it is hidden, and life goes on in strength. At last, however, its sad work is done, and at his prime the man falls.

One might suppose, however, that good old age, at least, is safe from moral danger. It has weathered the storms of many long years. It has passed through the experimental stages. The passions of youth have been brought under masterful control. Life is sobered, quiet, steady, strong, with ripened character, tried and secure principles, and with rich experiences. So we congratulate the old man on having gotten well through life, where he can at last enjoy the blessings of restful years.

But really, old age has perils of its own, which are quite as grave in their own way, as those of youth. Sometimes it does not fulfill the prophecy and the promise of the earlier years. Some men, who live nobly and richly until they have passed the meridian of their days--lose in the beauty and splendor of their character, and in the sweetness of their spirit, as they move toward the sunset.

Old age has its temptations and perils. It is hard to bear the honors of a good and worthy life, and not be spoiled by them, as they gather about the head when the years multiply. Some old men grow vain when they hear their names mentioned with honor, and when their good deeds are applauded. It is hard to keep the heart humble, and the life simple and gentle--when one stands amid the successes, the achievements, the ripened fruits, of many years of struggle, toil, and sacrifice, in the days of a prosperous old age. Some old men become self-conceited--quite too conscious of the good they have done, and the honor which gathers about their head. They grow talkative, especially about themselves and their own part in the achievements of the past. They like to tell the stories of the things they have done.

The ease and freedom from care which sometimes come as the fitting reward of a life of hardship, self-denial, struggle, and toil, do not always prove the most healthful conditions, or those in which the character appears at its best. Some men who were splendid in incessant action, when carrying heavy loads, meeting large responsibilities, and enduring sore trials--are not nearly so noble when they have been compelled to lay down their burdens, drop their tasks out of their hands, and step out of the crowding, surging ranks--into the quiet ways of those whose great life-work is mainly finished. They chafe at standing still. Their peace is broken in the very days, when it ought to be the calmest and sweetest.

They are unwilling to confess that they are growing old, and to yield their places of responsibility and care to younger men. Too often they make the mistake of overstaying their own greatest usefulness in positions which they have filled with fidelity and success in the past--but which, with their own waning powers, they can no longer fill acceptably and well as heretofore. In this respect old age puts life to a severe test. It is the part of true wisdom in a man, as he advances in years, to recognize the fact that he can no longer continue to carry all the burdens that he bore in the days of his strength, nor do all the work that he did when he was in his life's prime.

Sometimes old age grows unhappy and discontented. We cannot wonder at this. It becomes lonely, as one by one its sweet friendships and close companionships fall off in the resistless desolation which death produces. The hands that have always been so busy are left well-near empty. It is not easy to keep sweet and gentle-spirited when a man must stand aside and see others take up and do the things he used to do himself, and when he must walk alone where in former years his life was blessed with tender human companionships. Broken health also comes in, oftentimes, as a burden of old age, which adds to the difficulty of the problem of beautiful living.

These are some of the reasons why old age is a truer and sorer testing-time of character than youth or mid-life. New perils come with this period. Many men, who live nobly and victoriously in the days of active struggle and hard toil, fail in the days of quiet and ease. While busy, and under pressure of duty, they

prove true and faithful; but they fail in the time of leisure, when the pressure is withdrawn.

We should set ourselves the task, however, of living nobly and victoriously to the very close of life. We should make the whole day of life beautiful, to its last moments. The late afternoon should be as lovely, with its deep, serious blue, and its holy, restful quiet, as the forenoon, with its stir and freshness, and its splendor and sunshine; and the sun-setting should be as glorious with its amber and gold as the sun-rising with its glow and radiance.

The old, and those who are growing old, should never feel for a moment that their work, even their best work, is done, when they can no longer march and keep in step in the columns with youth and strong manhood. The work of the later and riper years is just as important as that of the earlier years. It is not the same work--but it is no less essential in the world. "Young men for action, old men for counsel," said the great philosopher. The life that one may live in the quieter time, when the rush and the strife are left behind, may be even more lovely, more Christlike, and more helpful, than was the life of the more exciting, stirring time which is gone.

It may mean more in results, in real fruitage, though lacking in stir and noise. Here is a parable of a beautiful old age--

The pathway of the righteous is compared to the shining light which shines more and more unto the perfect day. A good life ought to grow more and more beautiful every day. The task of sweet, useful living is no less a duty when one has gotten through the years of mid-life, into the borders of old age, than it was in the days of strength. A man should not slacken his diligence, earnestness, faithfulness, prayerfulness, or his faith in Christ, until he has come to the very gate of eternity.

One of the perils of old age, is just at this point. A man feels that his work is done, his character is matured, his reputation is established; and he is tempted to grow careless, as if it could not now matter much what he does or what he leaves undone. This is an error which sometimes proves very costly. There have been old men who in their very last years, for lack of the accustomed wisdom or restraint, have marred the beauty which through all their life their hands had been diligently and painstakingly fashioning.

Sometimes the fabric of a whole life-work is torn down in a few days or months of foolishness, when the watch is taken off the life, and discipline is relaxed.

We are not done with life in this world--until the hands have been folded on the breast in their final repose; therefore we should not slacken our diligence for an instant. We should make the last moments beautiful with trust and faith and sweet patience and quiet peace and earnest usefulness, dying beautifully.

How shall we live so that we shall be sure of a successful and beautiful old age? For one thing, all the life, from youth up, must be true and worthy. Old age is the harvest of all the years. It is the time when whatever we have sown--we shall also reap. Wasted years, too, give a harvest--a harvest of regret and sorrow, of unhappy memories, and remorseful self-accusing. We are building the house, all along the years, in which we must live when we grow old. The old man may change neighbors or change countries--but he cannot get away from himself.

To have a golden harvest--we must sow good seeds. To have sweet memories, we must live purely, unselfishly, thoughtfully, with reverence for God and love for man. We must fill our hearts with the harmonies of love and truth along the years, if in the silence of old age we would listen to songs of

gladness and peace.

The old should never let duties drop out of their hands. Duties may not be the same when years have brought feebleness--but every day to the close brings something for the hands to do. No old man has earned the right to be useless, even for a day. The old should never cease to look forward for the best of life. The year we are now living we should always make better than any year which is past. It was an old man, with martyrdom imminent, who gave as his theory of life the forgetting of things that are past, and the stretching forth to things that are before.

Such a life never grows old. Even at four-score, it is "eighty years young," not eighty years old. It is a beautiful fantasy, that in heaven the oldest are the youngest, since all life is toward immortal youth. Why may it not be so of the good on earth? We need not grow old. We can keep our heart young--our feelings, affections, yearnings, and hopes young. Then old age will indeed be the best of life--life's ripeness, life's times of coronation.

"It is a favorite speculation of mine," said Dr. Chalmers, "That if spared to sixty years of age, we then enter the seventh decade of human life, and that this, if possible, should be turned into the Sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage, and spent sabbatically, as if on the shores of an eternal world, or, as it were, in the outer courts of the temple which is above, the tabernacle which is in heaven."

This is a beautiful thought, with a suggestion which must commend itself to many devout people drawing toward old age. It does not imply a decade of idleness, or of selfish ease--but such a use of the life in its ripeness and richness of experience, as shall shed upon the world the holiest influence and blessings.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/on-growing-old-successfully/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**