

## Portrait of Old Age

### 2 Samuel 19:31-39

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 3-30-2014

## Introduction

A newly hired consultant walked into the personnel manager's office and rudely interrupted the conversation he was having with an employee. But he wanted a quick answer on how many of the company's employees were approaching retirement age. The personnel manager said, "All of them. Not one of them is going the other way."

All of us are aging; not one of us is going the other way. And I think it is useful to think of old age even when we are young. The last chapter of Ecclesiastes admonishes to do exactly that. Now, Ecclesiastes does *not* idealize old age. Not at all. In fact, it says, "Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more." (Eccl. 4:13). So we are not saying that age apart from godliness is a good thing. But in a country where people tend to do everything they can to avoid getting old, I think it is important to have a Biblical perspective on the subject. And this little portrait of old age at least gives an introduction into a Biblical philosophy of aging.

## I. Tired but not retired from life (v. 31) – still very involved

And the first thing that we see in verse 31 (and actually throughout the passage) is that Barzillai, though tired (and the following verses definitely show that he was tired) was not retired from life. Now, let me quickly make a distinction between retirement from a job and retirement from life. There are passages that talk about retirement from jobs. That's OK. For example, priests were required to retire from the heavy lifting of sacrificing animals at age 50 (Numbers 8:23,26), but they just moved on to other meaningful priestly work. Leviticus 27:7 and 1 Timothy 5:9 imply that age 60 is an age when retirement from certain other kinds of work can be expected. But the context of both of those passages indicates that those golden years usher them into other kinds of meaningful labor. And it is so important to understand that retirement from a job does not mean retirement from life. Like that first picture in your outlines that says, "I'm not retired, I'm redirected." I've seen too many people go downhill after they quit a job and see no more purpose for living; they fail to see that they can be useful. Barzillai is still very much involved in this world. He still has interests that go beyond his ghou, his bladder problems, and his other aches and pains. Right? Verse 31 says,

2Sam. 19:31 And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim and went across the Jordan with the king, to escort him across the Jordan.

This verse tells us a lot about this old man. First of all, he keeps informed on what's happening around him. He knows what is happening with David and he knows where to meet him. Being rich, he no doubt had servants who checked up on things and reported back. But even with that it still shows that he had interests that went beyond himself. If you are not rich, you can keep up on things by talking to those who are more informed. Church is one way of catching up on news. But getting newsletters is one way. And if you have a computer or an iPad you can stay in touch with what is happening in this world in other ways – without being dependent on the mainline media. But it is so important that we not become totally isolated from world events and crawl into a hole. So the first thing that we know about Barzillai is that he has been kept informed. That is clearly implied from verse 31. He knew what was happening 43 miles away – that's more than a day's journey away.

The second thing that is implied is that he still knows how to push his body beyond his comfort zone. This is the second trip within a few weeks that he has made in order to see his friend David. When David first fled from Jerusalem, Barzillai travelled 32 miles to bring David supplies and food, and he did it in a remarkably short period of time. If you trace the winding road from Rogelim to Mahanaim, you discover that in chapter 17 he traveled 32 miles to meet David, and then sometime after that travelled 32 miles back home. And that was not by car. That's a long trip. Now, some weeks later, he has travelled 43 miles to meet up with David and to wish him well. At eighty years old, that is really pushing your body.

And I understand - not everybody could do that. That's not the point. For some people, it may be pushing their body to get out of bed, rub their sore joints and walk around the house. That's OK. At least they are not giving up. It may be pushing their tired bodies to take care of a few basic housekeeping chores and cook their meals. Everybody's body is different, but the point that I want to emphasize is that a Biblical philosophy of aging does not let us give up just because life is hard. Till the day we die it is important to push ourselves to keep serving the Lord and not give up. I thought the Minnesota Medical Association had it exactly right when they said,

You may be old at 40 and young at 80; but you are genuinely old at any age if:  
You feel old;  
You feel you have learned all there is to learn;

You find yourself saying, “I’m too old to do that”;  
You feel tomorrow holds no promise;  
You take no interest in the activities of youth!  
You would rather talk than listen;  
You long for the “good old days”, feeling they were the best.

Those are all symptoms of the wrong kind of aging. Which really shows that what we are talking about is that your disposition or outlook on life makes all the difference in the world.

The third thing that is implied in this verse is that Barzillai was not risk averse. I can just hear his kids saying, “Dad! You’re too old to be making a 43-mile trip to the Jordan. And anyway, it’s dangerous. You get robbed. And what if you have a heart attack on the way.” My grandpa Kayser lived with my Aunt Minna during the last decades of his life, and there were people always telling Aunt Minna that she should forbid him from working in the garden. And her response was, “He loves to do it. Why would I take away the very activities that give him meaning in life?” And they argued with her that if he fell over in the garden he could break his hip, he could have a heart attack, reopen his hernia, etc., etc. But grandpa Kayser dug in the garden till the day he died (just short of 100 years old) – yes, balancing with a rake and looking pretty risky. But he had a full and fulfilled life. So don’t be risk averse.

Vance Havner told of a ninety-year-old who decided to travel around the world. His buddy came to him in distress, saying, “You shouldn’t try a trip like this. I might not see you again.” And the old man replied, “Maybe not. You may be dead when I get back!” He had spunk, just like Barzillai did.

Moses was 80 when God called him to lead Israel, and though he gave many excuses as to why he couldn’t serve, age wasn’t one of them. It didn’t even dawn on him that age could be an excuse, or I’m sure he would have given it. Plato became a student at age 50 and his most famous philosophy was written after reaching 60. Michael Angelo was still designing structures in his 89<sup>th</sup> year and painted the ceiling of Sistine Chapel on his back on a scaffold at near 90. People were probably having a heart attack watching him climb the scaffold. Don’t tell my father-in-law that; we’re trying to keep him off the roof – there is a balance on this. But Cato began studying Greek (a little bit safer project) at age 80. Strauss was still composing serious music after his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. My favorite opera writer, Verdi, wrote his masterpiece, Othello, at age 74. I love the BBC version of that. Verdi wrote Falstaff at 80, Ave Maria and Te Deum at 85. And I could go on and on.

And I don't give those statistics to say that all older people have equal abilities to go on. They don't. But within the capacity that God allows, we should encourage our aging parents and grandparents to live life as fully as they are able, even if that involves some risk. Don't be so protective of them that you squeeze the life out of them. Robert Savage said, "Much more important than adding years to your life is to add life to years."<sup>1</sup> And I say, "Amen." That would have been a great quote to give to people who were trying to keep my grandpa in the house. "Much more important than adding years to your life is to add life to years."

## II. Rich but not miserly (v. 32) – generous

Let's move on to verse 32:

2Sam. 19:32 Now Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. And he had provided the king with supplies while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he *was* a very rich man.

This shows to me that though Barzillai was very rich he was still serving. He still had a servant's heart. His riches had never captured his heart. He was generous. He cared about others. He had not allowed his accumulation of wealth to make him a miser. He had not allowed uncertainty about the future to make him stingy. Sometimes wealthy people can be the stingiest.

But generosity is not simply an issue of money. Some older people don't have money, but they can be generous with their time, their service, their counsel, and their words. Ken in the back was very generous after his retirement with time, counsel, and ministry. He engaged in evangelism, worked at the Truckers Chapel, and in other ways was generous. And sometimes the retirement years can be incredibly productive years. Part of what made Barzillai so generous was that he had faith in God, believed in a cause, was committed to principle, and was loyal to his friend. All of this made him think beyond himself and enabled him to minister even when he could have justifiably taken a break. General Douglas MacArthur once said,

...Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul... You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair.<sup>2</sup>

He is saying that there is an inward health of the soul that takes us past the lack of health in our bodies. But certainly on this issue of service, I hope I can have a servant's heart that is generous until the day I die.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Savage, *Pocket Wisdom* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1984), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Carl D. Windsor, *On This Day* (New York: Howard Books, 2006), p. 109.

### III. A man who looks at opportunities differently (v. 33) – perspective

The third thing that distinguishes Barzillai is that he has a different perspective on what is important. Look at the incredible offer that David makes in verse 33:

2Sam. 19:33 And the king said to Barzillai, “Come across with me, and I will provide for you while you are with me in Jerusalem.”

Most young men would have jumped at this opportunity to go to Jerusalem. Think of the influence he could have there. Think of the increased leverage for his family. Think of the increased wealth that was possible. And yet Barzillai turns down this magnificent offer. And I can understand it. When you know that you are nearing the end of your life, things that may have seemed important to you before, do not seem nearly as important. When people are dying, it is rare to see them regretting that they had not earned more money, or spent more hours at the office, or had not purchased bigger or better toys. Their regrets usually revolve around failures to have spent adequate time with their spouse, their children, and their grandchildren. When he leaves in verse 39 it is to spend more time with his family.

Most people gain a better perspective on what is important way too late in life. But I suspect that Barzillai already had that perspective much earlier. And you can too. Try to imagine your extended family throwing a huge party for you at age 90 and reminiscing about the past. What kinds of memories would you wish would be discussed at that time? Those are the kinds of things you should be striving for right now. What accomplishments would you look back on with a great deal of satisfaction? It’s interesting that Barzillai spent a great deal of exertion in helping David to be *restored* to the throne, but he doesn’t want to spend much time *at* David’s court. The first action was an action that could have made or lost the kingdom and would have had a huge impact on his descendants. It was an incredible investment that only he was poised to help with. But being part of David’s court was something that a number of men could have just as easily done. At your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, what character qualities do you wish that your grandkids could remember about you? Those are the things you should be putting on now. What values do you hope your family will pass on to many generations? Those are the values you need to be diligently instilling in them right now.

You see, every decision you make to say “Yes” to one opportunity is (whether you realize it or not) saying “No” to another opportunity. Another

way of saying that is that every decision is an economic decision. You have only so much time to divide up, and you need a long-term perspective to know how best to divide those minutes up. Barzillai turned down an incredible opportunity here. And some people without his perspective might say that it's simply a situation of the old proverb: when you finally get the opportunity to go into greener pastures you're too old to climb the fence. I don't think that's the case here. He had the energy to travel 43 miles; he could have gone to Jerusalem. He was turning down an incredible opportunity because he was seizing a better one at home. And it was precisely the aging of his body that probably helped him to have this perspective.

#### **IV. A man who knew his limits (vv. 34-35) - realistic**

##### ***A. Limits of time made him turn down offers (v. 34)***

Of course, I'm not knocking the fact that Barzillai could not as fully enjoy the comforts that David might have to offer. He himself says that such comforts were not that important to him. But it was perspective (point III) that drove the decision to say "No," and it was his limits (point IV) that made it easier to do so. So let's look next at the limits that tend to make older people a bit more realistic than us young'uns. And I tend to think that age 58 (soon to be 59) is still pretty young.

First, he had limits of time. Verse 34

**2Sam. 19:34** ¶ But Barzillai said to the king, "How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem?"

It's a nice offer, David, but honestly, I don't have much time left, and I want to make sure that every hour counts. The closer you get to death, the more limited your time seems to you. And as with every other commodity, the more limited an essential commodity is, the more you value it or treasure it. Rather than making himself busy with politics, Barzillai wanted to spend more time at home. Now, for somebody else (like a David) spending time in politics is exactly what God has called them to do. But we can't do everything, and Barzillai has chosen to spend his time on something else.

##### ***B. Limits of body made him value other things (v. 35a)***

But it wasn't just limits of time. Limits of body made him value other things as well. Verse 35 begins:

**2Sam. 19:35** I *am* today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women?...

As Vance Havner worded it, “The first half of our lives we are romantic. The last half we are rheumatic.”<sup>3</sup> Our bodily ailments just make us value things differently. The more you lose your taste buds, the less you value feasts. The more you lose your hearing, the less you value concerts. Just as the discomfort of a nine-month pregnancy makes a woman more and more ready to give birth, the pains and losses of bodily function make us more and more ready for heaven. But they also make us value things that we might not otherwise have valued quite as much. Robertson McQuilkin, the former president of Columbia International University, was driving with an elderly friend on an errand. She moved very slowly and painfully because of her arthritis, and at one point she asked him, “Robertson, why does God let us get old and weak? Why must I hurt so?”

“I’m not sure,” McQuilkin replied, “but I have a theory.”

“What is it?”

He hesitated to share it, but she insisted. This is what he said: “I think God has planned the strength and beauty of youth to be physical. But the strength and beauty of age is spiritual. We gradually lose the strength and beauty that is temporary, so we’ll be sure to concentrate on the strength and beauty which is forever.”

But honestly, we all should be striving to gain that perspective much earlier in life. Our aches and pains help to prepare us to value it, but the wise man or woman has valued those things even when they are young.

### ***C. Limits of health made him not want to be a burden (v. 35b)***

And point C, those limits of health also made Barzillai not want to be a burden to David. He says in the last part of verse 35,

...Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king?

He probably had hearing issues, which would make it difficult to sit on any of David’s councils. “I’m not going to be able to hear anything you are saying anyway.” He likely had bladder and other issues that would have made it tougher for both him and David to find the situation helpful. So even though this was a tempting offer, Barzillai’s severe limits of time, body, and health made him realistic. And we need to be sensitive to the elderly on how far we push them.

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<sup>3</sup> Vance Havner, *Three Score & Ten* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973), p. 72.

## V. A man who valued relationships more than money or position (v. 36) – priorities

Verse 36 brings up a fifth part of the picture that I see as significant. It says,

2Sam. 19:36 Your servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me *with* such a reward?

Tired as he was, he was willing to travel a few more miles to accompany David on his journey. But his priorities did not allow him to accept the reward, much as he valued the reward. So visiting David was important, traveling with David a few more miles was important, and going back to his family was important. Those three things were more important than the reward. From those facts I deduce that relationships were a higher priority than money. And if you can value relationships more than bringing in the money now, you will not have as many regrets when you get to the end of your life. You can take your relationships with you to heaven; you can't take much else.

Clovis Chappell, a Methodist minister in the early 1900's, used to tell the true story of two paddleboats that raced on the Mississippi River. They left Memphis about the same time, traveling to New Orleans. As they traveled side by side, the sailors from one boat made remarks about the snail's pace of the other. Words were exchanged, challenges made, and a race began. Competition was fierce as the two boats roared through the Deep South. One boat began to fall behind because it was running out of coal. As the boat dropped back, an enterprising young sailor took some of the ship's cargo and tossed it into the ovens. When the sailors saw that the supplies burned as well as coal, they fueled the boat with the material they had been assigned to transport. They ended up winning the race, but lost the cargo they had been commissioned to carry.<sup>4</sup> I've heard of men being so goal-oriented that they become stupid, but if this story is true, it really takes the cake.

Well, God has entrusted a cargo to us, too. That cargo includes our calling or job, but it also includes our children, spouses, friends, church, witness, and other things. If you become so driven by the goal of success that you lose track of why you have been placed on earth, you become like those sailors. How much cargo are you willing to sacrifice in order to

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<sup>4</sup> As told by Max Lucado, *In the Eye of the Storm*, (Word Publishing, 1991), pp. 97-98.



achieve the number one spot? Barzillai wasn't willing to do that. And this portrait of him shows wisdom.

## **VI. Preparing to die (v. 37a) – respect for the living**

The sixth thing that we see in this mini portrait of old age is that Barzillai was ready to die and he was preparing to die. Verse 37:

**2Sam. 19:37** Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother...

He was preparing to die, and he didn't want to die in Jerusalem. He wanted his grave to be near those of his parents. To me this shows that he did not fear death. But more importantly, it shows that he was preparing for death, which is something every one of us ought to do. Joe Morecraft got me thinking about that in 1981, when pastor Black was using Morecraft's notes on Deuteronomy. Well, he had an appendix that was titled, "How to Prepare Your Funeral." It's not a morbid subject. In fact, preparing for your funeral shows respect for the living. Talk to Ken about that some time. He helped many people to prepare for death, and the relatives were very grateful. Just as having life insurance shows respect for your spouse, making the transition for your death a little bit smoother shows respect for your family. That doesn't mean that you have to own a gravesite, though that is not a bad idea. But make sure that your papers are in order and that your children know where to find the things you have hidden. Actually, I've got to write them down or I will forget where I've hidden them. But the more you can get your paperwork in order, the less stressful your death will be to the family. I also highly recommend that you have a medical directive to help guide your children about health decisions in the area of tricky medical ethics. And I would be happy to give you guidance on the ethics of various medical decisions. But doing that can take a lot of stress out of life. I do *not* recommend a Living Will. The medical establishment in recent years has hugely abused Living Wills. Medical Directive, yes; Living Will, no. And I do not recommend unqualified organ donation unless you have a medical directive that helps to navigate the ethical minefields. And in the will and the medical directive you need to designate someone that you trust with medical power of attorney. You need to think through inheritance. If you have a good lawyer, he can help you to think through a lot of the issues involved in having a good will. It's a kindness to your family. Robert Morgan speaks of the seven stages of life being spills (that's babyhood), drills (that's grade school), thrills (I guess that would be teenage life), bills, ills, pills, and wills. And that last one, wills, is neglected by way too many Christians. If you don't want the taxman and attorneys to consume your life savings, have a

lawyer make out a will. And if you have a lot of assets, you may want to consider doing a trust. There is a lot that goes into preparing to die.

## **VII. Interested in a family legacy (v. 37b-38) – investing in the future (cf. Jer. 41:17)**

The seventh thing that I see in this portrait is that Barzillai was thinking about his family's future in verses 37-38.

2Sam. 19:37 Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham [that was either a son or a grandson]; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you.”

2Sam. 19:38 ¶ And the king answered, “Chimham shall cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do for you.”

Barzillai had apparently thought through which of his descendants would be most perfectly suited to life with the king. We aren't told why he thought Chimham would be the best. It may have been that Chimham had a strong enough character to not be seduced by life in the Capitol. It may have been that he was not as well suited for taking over the family business. We are not told. But we do know that Barzillai was thinking about the family legacy. He was thinking about the legacy not only in why he returned to his city, but also in using his connections in getting this son or grandson well placed. And apparently Chimham did quite well. Apparently he inherited some of David's own property near Bethlehem, and 500 years later that property was still known as the habitation of Chimham in Jeremiah 41:17. To me this indicates that Chimham did pretty well, and was quite well known. This action of Barzillai had an incredibly long-term benefit for his descendants. It impacted things for the better for 500 years.

And all of us need to think of how we can best invest in the future. I despise the signs on large recreational vehicles that say, “I am spending my children's inheritance.” It doesn't mean that the elderly cannot enjoy a lot more in life than they did when they were younger. Of course they can. That's the whole point of deferred gratification. You are deferring it, not denying it. But we must have a multi-generational perspective on many levels.

## **VIII. Friendship and settling down (v. 39) – a realism**

Verse 39 says,

**2Sam. 19:39** Then all the people went over the Jordan. And when the king had crossed over, the king kissed Barzillai and blessed him, and he returned to his own place.

There are two things highlighted here – friendship and going home. The friendship can be seen in that Barzillai took the extra effort to cross the Jordan and spend time with David, and David (whose heart wished that Barzillai could be closer, kissed him and blessed him). The settling down at home part emphasizes the realism he had about old age. As we get older it might take more and more effort to connect with friends, and it might take more time to recuperate from our efforts. But till the day we die, we should make it our aim to have a Biblical balance of work, relationships, and relaxation. Those mixes will change the older we get, but they should all be there.

### **Conclusion – four more general observations**

While there is a lot more that could be said about aging with grace, I just want to conclude with four more general observations from this passage. The first observation is to not think of the retirement years as the years to do nothing. Some of our physical bodies simply can't do much, but when doing research for this sermon, I did find it interesting that with the exception of Alexander the Great, Shelley, Keats, and a small handful of other famous people, the vast majority of the accomplishments that still stand out in history were done by people who were older than fifty. In fact, the vast majority were older than 60. Martin Sherwood cited a study done in the last century that tried to narrow things down to four hundred of the most famous people and accomplishments in history from all walks of life and studied when they made their most noteworthy accomplishments. Initially the committees didn't actually look at the age of the person. They just noted the people and their accomplishments. And when the first committee came to general agreement, they passed the list on to a second committee who had also been doing the same project. This went back and forth until there was general agreement between the two committees of the 400 most significant accomplishments. And it was only after this was done, that the date at which each accomplishment happened was noted, and the list was divided up by decades. Here were the results:<sup>5</sup>

- Ages 60-70 accounted for 35% of the world's greatest achievements

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<sup>5</sup> A. Naismith, *2400 Scripture Outlines, Anecdotes, Notes, & Quotes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), p. 144.

- Age 70—80 accounted for 23% of the world's greatest achievements
- Ages 80 and above – 6%

This means that 64% of the world's greatest achievements were made by people who were 60 years old or more. That's astounding! So much for idealizing youth! The figures for the other periods of life were also interesting.

- Ages 50-60 accounted for another 25%
- Ages 40-50 accounted for 10%

And when everything was totaled together, only 1% of the world's greatest achievements were accomplished by people under the age of 40, and those included people like Alexander the Great, Shelley, and Keats. Don't despise the process of aging. Now, of course, those 60 year olds were basing their accomplishments on 60 years of knowledge and experience, so don't despise the younger years either. But it does appear that it is after the age of 50 when hopefully the accumulation of wisdom, experience, money, and descendants enables the godly man to leverage his limited time enormously. And he doesn't *have* much time – he *has* to leverage it. Don't dread getting old. Look forward to it. I so respected my gray haired father that I have looked forward to being a gray haired man since before I was in first grade. In fact, I cannot remember a time when I have not looked forward to the stage when I would have a crown of glory. That's how much impact that my gray-haired father had upon me.

The second thing that I would say is to honor and bless the aged just like David did. Leviticus 19:32 says, "You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I *am* the LORD." Do you want to be remembered as a person who fears the LORD? Then honor the aged. Bless them. Take care of them. You never know how long they will be around. In fact, it was kind of funny – a Presbyterian pastor in California by the name of James Hewett was asked what it was like being 90 years old. And he said, "One good thing about becoming ninety years old is that you're not subject to much peer pressure." Most of the friends in his age group had died off. We can't count on having them around forever, and we need to make the effort to bless them. And even if they cannot accomplish much in their old age, bless them and honor them. I think the time I spent as an orderly taking care of the extremely aged was a tremendous time of learning for me.

The third thing that I would admonish each of us on is to be sensitive to the physical needs and fears of the elderly. Because of incontinence, arthritis, and just plain tiredness, they may not be able to do the long trips with you that they used to. They may be forgetful. Just being forgetful does not mean they are senile. That ninety year old that I told you about was a pretty sharp man, but he once confessed,

One of the most disturbing aspects of aging is the growing inability to recall vitally important information – such as the gross national product of Liberia, the Greek alphabet, and where you put your slippers. This affliction becomes particularly pronounced when you go upstairs to get something. Halfway up, you realize that you have no inkling of what you were going upstairs to fetch. Then – you have to decide whether to go back downstairs and try to remember what you needed, or continue on up and look for something that needs bringing down. Unable to decide, you resort to sitting on the landing and sulking, only to discover that you have completely forgotten whether you were originally upstairs going down or downstairs going up!”<sup>6</sup>

I’m glad he has a good sense of humor about it. But you may be a David who really wants a Barzillai to be doing things with you. And I would just say, “That’s great if he can. But be sensitive.”

My last admonition is to those with disabilities. Bless the younger generation just as Barzillai did. Continue to have the faith of Barzillai who showed that he could still fight for a good cause and could still make sacrifices for friends. He couldn’t fight with his hands, but he could fight with his money and his prayers. The aged Paul said that though his body was outwardly deteriorating, his inward man was being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). In other words, he wasn’t growing old inside. He still had plenty of life. And it’s the inward man that counts the most on this question of godly aging. Robert Savage rightly said, “Hardening of the heart ages people more quickly than hardening of the arteries.” May the testimony of President John Quincy Adams be *your* testimony. When he was a very old man he was asked by someone how he was doing. And with a smile on his face he said,

Thank you, John Quincy Adams is very well himself, sir; but the house in which he lives is falling to pieces. Time and seasons have nearly destroyed it. The roof is well worn, the walls shattered. It trembles with every gale. I think John Quincy Adams will soon have to move out. But he himself is very well, sir.

He himself is very well. May that be true of your soul in every decade of your life as you take Barzillai as one of your role models. Amen.

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<sup>6</sup> James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988), p. 22

