

“Growing Young”



“Legacy is not leaving something for people. It is leaving something in people.”

--Peter Strophe

Bette Davis was one of the most iconic actors in Hollywood history. Her forthright manner, distinctive speech, and ever-present cigarette contributed to a public persona often imitated today. Known for her quick wit, Bette summarized her thoughts about growing old, *“Old age ain’t no place for sissies”*.

Bette Davis was right. Growing old is not easy. Busyness becomes loneliness far too quickly. The children and grandchildren are grown and gone. Afternoon naps become the new normal. Our get up and go, got up and went! Our bodies and our minds just do not work the way they used to work. The aspirations of youth have given way to the aggravations of aging. Yet, many older adults are reveling in this unique time in life. Their “Golden Years” are truly golden. They seem to be growing...younger.

In his second and final letter to young Timothy, the great Apostle Paul was facing the reality of his own death. He was growing old, yet his words to his young friend were full of energy, rich with wisdom and fresh with emotion and purpose. As Paul faced the end of his life, he seemed to be growing *younger*. In his heartfelt reflections on the past (another characteristic of growing old!), Paul’s words were seasoned with compassion, purpose and hope. Maybe those are the key ingredients in the recipe of growing young.

You take over. I am about to die, my life an offering on God’s altar. This is the only race worth running. I have run hard right to the finish, believed all the way. All that is left now is the shouting—God’s applause! (II Timothy 4:6-7)

Compassion... The Apostle Paul found a Godly delight in giving himself away to a young, timid pastor in desperate need of encouragement, confidence and affirmation. Paul's relationship with Timothy became a major part of his legacy. Many people think of legacies in material terms, but leaving an impact on another life brings a deep sense of contentment in our later years. Business strategist, Peter Strophe said, *"Legacy is not leaving something for people. It is leaving something **in** people."* Paul passionately desired to leave a part of himself in young Timothy. *"Every time I say your name in prayer—which is practically all the time—I thank God for you...I miss you a lot, especially when I remember that last tearful good-bye and I look forward to a joy-packed reunion..."* (II Timothy 1:3-4).

Purpose... Paul's mentoring relationship with Timothy gave him a Godly purpose in his later years. He became a coach, giving himself away to a young man needing guidance. Being an active part of Timothy's life helped Paul finish his journey well. *"So, my son, throw yourself into this work for Christ. Pass on what you heard from me to reliable leaders who are competent to teach others. When the going gets rough, take it on the chin with the rest of us, the way Jesus did."* (II Timothy 2:1-3)

Hope... Growing old was a joy for Paul. Timothy's life and ministry kept Paul young and gave him hope. His final years mentoring Timothy were his greatest. Timothy benefited greatly from the wisdom and experience of an aging apostle. My guess is that young Timothy had no idea how much Paul was also receiving from him. Having Timothy in his life allowed Paul to grow...younger. *"That precious memory triggers another: the special gift of ministry you received when I laid hands on you and prayed—keep that ablaze! God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible."* (II Timothy 1:5-7).

Bette Davis was right. Old age ain't no place for sissies. It is, however, a place for leaving a relational legacy of character, faith and love in the lives of our grandchildren, our children and other young people like Timothy that God has entrusted to our care.