

HOW TO KEEP YOUNG IN THE MINISTRY.

The application of human efforts to the work of the salvation of souls changes with the changing years. What was eminently successful years ago will not do now. The loss of ministerial efficiency with many early in life is not altogether the fault of the people of the churches, but is due to the fact that the minister becomes wedded to his youthful plans and will not change his methods of doing his work. He preserves his identity while the generations have travelled beyond him. The habits of thought and the facts of life have to him changed imperceptibly. Ministerial life and its duties must be lived and acted in the spirit of the injunction as to prayer, "watch and pray." A man is dead who does not discern the signs of his times. The means to ends do not change, but the applications of these means do. They must be as changeful as the phases of prevailing thought.

The same premature senility is often seen in the medical profession—in indeed in every profession that deals with life. Some doctors never get beyond the instructions of their universities. The universities change in every session, but they do not. They are the mile stones on the ways of life, and their juniors are constantly passing them, as their patients are also. There are no professions where so many men are old fossils at forty as in the ministry and medicine. Such men worship stability instead of progress. They praise the old ways, the wisdom of the fathers, forgetting that the wisdom of the fathers was not stationary intellectual and moral furniture, but was in motion, or it would not have been wisdom. The wisdom of the fathers has left them long ago, as Elijah left Elisha when he dropped his mantle in his hand. The forms of knowledge to which men become wedded are no more knowledge than the knee-breeches and surtout of 1776 were its loyalty and statesmanship.

Age is not a constant, but a relative quality in the ministry. Men are senile at twenty-five and youthful at seventy-six. Dr. John Chambers was never called old. We never heard, nor did anybody else hear him called old Doctor, or even the venerable John Chambers. He could not separate himself even in thought from the young men of his church, and they could

not think of his being older than themselves. There are three ways of keeping youth. The first is in companionship with God, for God's immortality is absorbed in immortal youth by those who walk with, commune with, and so please, God. The second is companionship with the thoughts and their court dress of our times, and especially of our later years, and especially with the pulpit literature of younger men who are leading the public mind, instead of criticising them and snarling because their efforts will not press into the mould of men fifty years old. It would be better to consider if those iron-bound moulds of twenty-five years ago cannot be altered to the present style and demand. Preachers of over fifty ought to read all popular sermons. If they have been thinkers they will not be hurt in their originality by them, while they may be immensely freshened and popularized by them. The third way of keeping young in the ministry is in association with the young, and this is more difficult to do than would appear at first glance. As a minister starts down the water-shed of life his family begins to dissolve, and home isolation begins. The noisy, romping children, that ever keep youth before him, and its vitality by contact at least, in him, are either in the cemeteries or married, or far off in the battle of life, and he adjusts himself to the changed and saddening order of life. He becomes introspective, a wiser, but a sadder man. Others' children become a burden to him, and so he dries up for want of youthful companionships.

But if he will be young in his ministry he must resist this evil tendency; and resist this until he gains the mastery, and feels lonely without the hopes and mirthfulness of the young in his congregation. He must be one with them, and one that they cannot do without, one who is the charm of their social life, a gentle restraint upon them it may be, but only as the harper lays his hand on the frets of his harp-strings, not to deaden, but to sweeten their sounds. He must be the joy of their pic-nics and parties, and if they want to put wreaths of flowers over his gray locks or lockless head let them do it, and soon they will wreath that loved head with their tokens of sanctified affection.—*Phil. Pres.*

Grace to separate from evil-doers is one of the things that accompany salvation.