

Proverbs 16:31

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.

Analysis

The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. Ateret tif'eret seyah (עֲתָרוֹת תִּפְאָרֶת שֵׁיבָה, a crown of glory is gray hair). Seyyah (שֵׁיבָה, gray hair, old age) can be glorious. Bederekh tsedaqah timmatse (בְּדַרְךָ צְדָקָה) can be glorious. Bederekh tsedaqah timmatse (בְּדַרְךָ צְדָקָה, in the way of righteousness it is found). The condition: righteousness. Old age isn't automatically honorable—only when accompanied by godly living. Leviticus 19:32 commands: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man." Yet only righteous age deserves honor. Believers should pursue righteousness throughout life, aiming for honored old age.

Historical Context

Ancient cultures generally honored elderly, viewing longevity as divine blessing. Yet Scripture qualifies this—wicked old age brings shame, not glory (Isaiah 65:20). Examples: Abraham honored in old age (Genesis 25:8), David crowned with glory (1 Chronicles 29:28), but Eli died dishonored (1 Samuel 4:18). The proverb taught pursuing righteousness for glorious, honored old age or shameful decline.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Are you living now in ways that will make your old age a crown of glory or a source of shame?
2. How does contemporary culture's youth obsession conflict with biblical respect for righteous age?
3. What does it mean to pursue righteousness with a long-term view toward honored, godly old age?

Interlinear Text

תְּמִזְאָה: אֲזַקֵּה הַדָּבָר שִׁבְעַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּצָבָא נְתַת עַל כֶּתֶם תְּמִזְאָה: אֲזַקֵּה הַדָּבָר שִׁבְעַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּצָבָא נְתַת עַל כֶּתֶם
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Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:29 (Glory): The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the gray head.

Leviticus 19:32 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.

Philemon 1:9 (Parallel theme): Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ.