

A Biblical Perspective on Aging – Part 1

or

“Should We Stop Searching for the Fountain of Youth?”

Intro. Passages like Psalm 90, 39, and James 4:14 remind us that our lives on earth are brief and marked by a process of decline and deterioration that ultimately leads to physical death. How we deal with this reality – in both our attitudes and actions – will determine to a large extent the “quality of life” that we will have until the day we die. True quality of life is largely dependent on whether or not we have adopted God’s view of life and are applying His wisdom to our daily struggle with the aging process. Let’s take a serious look at God’s perspective on aging and death.

- 1. The processes of aging and of dying are direct results of sin’s entrance into the world which impacts all of mankind and all of creation.** (Romans 5:12; 8:18-22; Genesis 3; Psalm 102:8-11, 18-28; 90:10-17) All of creation is under the curse of sin and gives evidence of the bondage of such corruption. Aging and dying are rooted in a spiritual condition of man being separated from and at odds with the Creator and Sustainer of life due to man’s sin. It is a universal condition.

We must accept the reality of this process instead of denying it or pretending it is not so. We must also recognize that it is a reminder of sin’s effects and of man’s need of a Savior.

- 2. The processes of aging and death are under the control of a sovereign and loving God who chooses to use even our sufferings and trials to draw people to trust Him and to become more like His Son, Jesus Christ.** (Psalm 71:5-21; 48:14; 68:20; Joshua 23:14; I Kings 2:1-2; Psalm 22; Isa. 38:1-5; Romans 8:18-39; 5:3-5; James 1:2-5). Our gradual aging with all of its aches, pains, doctor visits, etc. are within the will of God who is using these things for our good and for His glory.

Instead of grumbling and complaining or growing angry and bitter, we must trust our loving Father with each day’s challenges and thank Him for how He is using these things in our lives. Even serious or sudden catastrophes or diagnoses are not out-of-control surprises to Him but are special tools in His hands to further His work in our hearts.

- 3. Even though our bodies are physically aging and weakening, we are to be spiritually maturing and growing stronger and healthier in the Lord and to be producing more and more fruit in and through our lives for His glory.** (II Cor. 4:7-18; John 15:1-8, 16; Psalm 92:12-15)

Physical decline should be no excuse for spiritual decline. Let’s not retire from the sanctification process. If we are still alive then God is not finished with us yet and He is desirous that we grow closer to Him and continue to be productive for Him. Though physically weaker and limited our hearts and lives should give

A Biblical Perspective on Aging – Part 2

Intro. In our first study on this topic we were reminded that God's Word does indeed address this subject and that each one of us should be aging according to God's will and wisdom, not according to this world's or our own personal feelings on the matter. Then we looked at five biblical themes on this subject as follows:

1. The processes of aging and of dying are direct results of sin's entrance into the world which impacts all of mankind and all of creation.
2. The processes of aging and death are under the control of a sovereign and loving God who chooses to use even our sufferings and trials to draw people to trust Him and to become more like His Son, Jesus Christ.
3. Even though our bodies are physically aging and weakening, we are to be spiritually maturing and growing stronger and healthier in the Lord and to be producing more and more fruit in and through our lives for His glory.
4. Our aging provides greater opportunities to receive more of God's grace – as we humble ourselves by admitting our need for help and asking for it.
5. The latter stages of aging can provide wonderful opportunities to gather family and friends together for tender times of fellowship, worship, imparting of blessings, wisdom etc. (For Scriptures and further comments on these, please see Part 1.)

Now let's continue with 5 more principles:

6. While growing older we may still be faced with temptations daily, perhaps different ones than those with which we wrestled in our youth, but real temptations to sin, nevertheless. We must depend on God's grace to resist these temptations and to obey the Lord. (Let's not forget confession and forgiveness, either.) (I Cor.10:13; Eccl. 12:1-8; Heb. 2:14-15; Romans 6; I John 1:9; Eph. 4:25-32)

These temptations may include:

- jealousy of the health and mobility of younger people
- impatience and irritability with medical restraints and limitations
- lashing out in anger or unkindness at family members or caregivers
- resentments, anger, bitterness about past or present circumstances
- paralyzing fears and anxieties of disease, loneliness, humiliation, death
- attitudes of depression due to feeling useless, wanting to give up, etc.
- refusing to depend on God's provision through others
- deliberate withdrawing from church, family, or others
- complaining and grumbling

When we discover ourselves yielding to these temptations we need to identify it as sin, confess it before God and any others we may have sinned against, cease doing it and begin to do the opposite – replacing the sin with a Godly attitude or action, by His grace.

7. Awareness and acknowledgement of our aging provides daily opportunities both to focus on eternity (II Cor. 4:17-18; Phil. 3:20-21; II Tim. 4:6-8; Rev. 21-22) and to invest in it.(Matt. 6:19-21; I Cor. 3:11-15; Phil. 1:22-26; Psalm 92:12-15)

Focusing on eternity involves meditating, reading, rejoicing, looking forward to heaven and all the future blessings God has for us.

Investing in eternity involves continuing to minister to others by sharing wisdom and counsel (Psalm 90:10), praying (Phil 4:6-7; I Thess. 5:17-18), personal worship (Psalm 63:1-8), teaching children and grandchildren about greatness of God (Psalm 71:17-18; 78:1-8ff; Titus 2:3-4), journaling God's faithfulness (Psalm 37:23-25), witnessing (Matt. 28:19-20), exhorting others (Heb. 10:23-25), etc.

8. As our earthly future becomes shakier and more uncertain, we are not to worry about it but to trust God with it and to experience His protective peace. (Phil. 4:4-19; Psalm 37:23-25; 48:14; 71:5-24; Isa. 46:3-4, 8-11; Matt. 6:19-34; I Peter 5:7)

The cultivation of a daily personal prayer habit and a moment by moment conversation with God is a necessity in these latter years. Become a faithful prayer warrior; it is one of the most important and meaningful activities in which you could invest your time.

9. The "status" of old age" should be honored and respected by others. (Lev. 19:32; Ex. 20:12; I Tim. 5:1; Prov. 16:31)

The life and experience of an older person, their wisdom and perspective have great value and should not be belittled or disrespected. All of the common courtesies should be bestowed on them; the younger should be eager to honor and to serve the older.

Also, the aged should not make it harder or inappropriate for those closest to them to show them such respect (by their nastiness, stubbornness, pride, etc.)

10. Our overall purpose for living, aging, and dying is to magnify Jesus Christ – to exalt Him to make Him appear greater, to be seen more clearly before others. (Phil.

1:19-21) (Why not memorize these 3 verses and make them, not your "life verse" but your "aging verse"? We need "verses to age by".

This should be done daily and, as Paul says, boldly - without shame, and bodily - while still in and through these aging bodies. Our aging bodies and weakened condition can still be a demonstration of our wonderful Savior's love and grace. And there is no greater reason for living, dying, or for aging!! Praise the Lord!!

evidence of our sweet personal relationship with the Lord and of our desire to please Him.

4. **Our aging provides greater opportunities to receive more of God's grace – as we humble ourselves by admitting our need for help and asking for it. God has placed around us family members and church family members to help us when our needs increase. He desires us to remain dependent on His grace and on the resources which He provides to care for us in such times of need.**

(I Peter 5:5-7; James 4:6-10; I Tim. 5:3-8, 16; Prov. 24:10-12) God promises to give His grace to the humble. Asking for help and allowing others to help is very humbling. Refusing to do so when a need exists is sinful pride which can prevent even God from helping us.

As we age, it is not a time to declare our independence and to refuse to admit that we are having problems and might need some help. It is time to thank the Lord for the resources He has provided for us and to allow others to help us with our needs. It is not a time to increase the distance between family members or those of the church family, but it is a time to draw them closer and to willingly give and receive help from them.

5. **The latter stages of aging can provide wonderful opportunities to gather family and friends together for tender times of fellowship, worship, imparting of blessings, wisdom, admonitions, heartfelt desires and hopes for the family, etc.** (Gen. 49:1-33; 50:1) The preparation of a will or of other written personal directives to family members can be helpful in sharing one's wishes for them.

When we are aware that our time may be winding down we should take every opportunity to communicate from our hearts to our loved ones. Often families try to hide from the ill person the facts of his soon demise. Or they pretend and hope among themselves that all will work out and the person will recover. They end up actually lying to themselves and to their loved ones and thus prevent the very communication that should be taking place among them. These should be special times of talking, reminiscing, clearing up the past, providing wisdom for the future, and for genuine expressions of love, gratitude, and respect.