

Thoughts on the Aged and Dying

By: Bill Stamp

As we have all heard it said, (more times than we wanted to hear it) "Growing old is not so bad when you consider the alternative." The only time I really had a bad time with my age and growing old was when I turned fifty years of age. For some reason I thought that was the time when you were put out to pasture because you weren't good for anything else. This attitude probably came from my childhood when I remember hearing the adults talking about a friend they knew who had turned fifty and they talked like it was about over for him. Then when I became 50, I felt like it was about over for me. Someone, I don't remember who, tried to cheer me up by saying that 50 was just middle age but that didn't help because I couldn't think of any hundred year old people who I knew. Praise the Lord because He got my mind off of the negative aspects of becoming fifty and on to the positive aspects as He reminded me that fifty was the Biblical year of Jubilee and fifty was the word for "Pentecost". That gave me a whole new perspective on becoming fifty. Becoming sixty and seventy years of age was a piece of cake by comparison because my attitude about life changed by seeing each day I live as a gift of the "grace of life" as Peter describes it in 1 Peter 3:7. I feel very blessed to have lived to be 71 ½ years old. What amazing grace God has been shed upon me! I haven't earned this nor do I deserve to have lived this long but I am grateful. I think of so many of my friends and loved ones who have already passed on and I'm still here, why I have lived longer than both my parents and both of my wife's parents by over eighteen years. Who knows how many days of grace on this earth God will grant to me?

Actually, ageing should be looked upon as blessing not a blight. As Paul states in **2 Cor 4:16, though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.** The "outward man" is our body and the "inward man" is really who we are. Therefore, we are not what is really perishing, it is only our body. We, the spirit man, are being renewed day by day. To be renewed means to be growing young again in our inner man. This process of renewal is going on at the same time of the process of the outward man decaying. So growing old is a matter of perspective. From the natural or earthly perspective we are growing older, but from the supernatural or Heavenly perspective we are getting younger and full of life and energy. This reminds me of Isaiah's words. **"But they that wait**

upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isa 40:31) We can have soaring power with the eagles; we can have surging power with the deer; or we can have staying power with the walkman. All because we wait **on**, which means to minister unto, the Lord. Growing old is not so bad, **huh?**

For the past several years I have been a hospice chaplain, and as such I have had the privilege to lead a number of souls to the Lord before they exited out of their earth suit **into** death. I can't tell you how fulfilling it is to be able to assure those who have a terminal illness in their body (which we all have) that if they have received Christ's gift of eternal life they shall never die according to Jesus words in John 11:25,26 **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”** Also, I can comfort them with the words of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church **“to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Cor 5:8)**

To the Christian, dying should never be feared when you consider what the Apostle Paul said to the church at Philippi, **“to live is Christ and to die is gain”(Phil.1:21)**. Some Christians look at dying as a loss. But God says, “heads we win and tails we win”. This can only be a reality in our lives when Christ is ever uppermost in all we do. If we say that my family, or my ministry, or my vocation, or anything other than Christ is my life, than to die is a loss not a gain. But with **“Christ in you the hope of Glory”(Col. 1:27)** death is a celebration of victory, not something we should fear as defeat.

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