

# CHALLENGES OF AGING (03).

**May 06, 2007.**

## **Review.**

The apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." (*2Cor.4:16*). The Bible makes it clear that your outer man, your physical body will decay. It will grow old. It will die. On the other hand *Eccl.3:11* says that God has set eternity in our hearts. We have been studying the subject, "**The Challenges of Aging.**" This morning we come to our final study on this subject. So far in our studies we have covered seven major points. They are :

- 1). Mankind's Allotted Years.
- 2). Sin's Ravages.
- 3). Your Health.
- 4). Common Sufferings.
- 5). Be Thankful to God.
- 6). Indulging in Futilities.
- 7). Using Your Maturity.

In our last study we saw that there comes a point when it is futile to fight off aging. You should do the things that are necessary to make your life more comfortable and enjoyable. But you should keep in mind that despite the promises of science, you will not be able to hold off the inevitable. Under the seventh major point we saw that Christians who are growing older should become a reservoir of increasing knowledge, wisdom, understanding, insight and discernment which they should seek to pass on to the younger generations.

I do not want to spend too much time reviewing our past study. A copy of the tape or CD is available to those who want it. So let us press on with today's study.

### **Warnings.**

I want to begin today with a few words of warnings. The first warning is a repetition of a point I already made. As Christians we must embrace what God has revealed in His word concerning the reality of aging and the reasons for it. We saw also that the reality of aging and death does not mean that you can be careless and neglect your health. God requires that you take the best possible care of your health. I want to emphasize this especially to the young people.

The care you take of your health now may well determine the quality of life you will have when you begin to age. Note carefully my words, **“may well determine”**. You do not know what God's sovereign purposes are for you. And it is not your business to speculate. Furthermore, you are not commanded to conduct your life based on what may or may not be God's sovereign secret will, plans or purposes for your life. You are required to conduct your life based upon God's revealed will, that is, on what you know.

Beware of the danger of becoming a health fanatic. You must not make health-care an idol in your life. Beware also of being careless and putting idolatrous dependence on science to pull you out of the poor-health hole you may be digging for yourself.

The second point I want to emphasize is that your children want parents, not peers. Aging mothers are known to compete with their daughters. Aging fathers are known to compete with their sons. When parents begin to compete with their children, it is a mark of serious insecurity in the parents. It is also a sign that the marriage has problems.

Another danger that exists is that of parents trying to re-live their lives through their children. That is exceedingly wrong and very dangerous. You could cause your children

to become greatly embittered against you because of this. This is not the place to work out the dangers of this practice. I just want to alert you to it and warn you against it.

### **Prepare For Retirement.**

The second point I want to deal with today is the fact that as Christians you should prepare for retirement. Yes, it is a fact that there is no doctrine of retirement in the Bible. The command of work and rest will apply until you die. But on the other hand, society has a retirement age for adults. When that time comes, you will have to retire. Your plans for retirement should include an income to live on during your retirement years. I am not a financial adviser, so I cannot give you any further advice here. There are people in the church who can give you such advice if you need it.

As a Christian, what are your plans for your retirement years? There is the reality for some who, when they retire, they must find other jobs because their income is not enough to live on. It is not my intent to deal with this problem nor to make you feel guilty if you happen to fall into this bracket. The reasons for being in this bracket are manifold. And this is not the time for analyzing those reasons. It is my intent to speak to those who do not fall into this bracket. And it is also my intent to speak to the young and urge them to take every action to protect themselves from falling into this bracket.

It is our earnest and ongoing prayer that every child raised in this church will become a Christian and live a life that is faithful to the Lord and glorifying to His name. We desire to see you work hard and be successful in your studies and prepare yourself for life in this world. You should aim for a career that will provide for you a proper retirement. You should also get good financial advice along the way and make some investments that would enhance your retirement years. You will discover that no human plan is foolproof. So as you live before the Lord and prayerfully plan, keep in mind the Lord's words, "The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." (*Prov.16:9*).

But the question arises again : as a young person, what should be your plans for your retirement years? The question before every adult in this church is : what are your plans for your retirement years? Is your plan : let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die? You have worked hard. You have saved, you have invested wisely, and you have a good retirement income. Will your approach now be : I have earned the right to kick back and relax and enjoy life?

My challenge to you is to prepare to invest your retirement years in the service of God. I am not saying that you should deny yourself rest, relaxation and enjoyment of the fruits of your labor. The Bible is clear on the fact that every person should enjoy the fruits of their labor. *Eccl.2:24* says, “There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good.”

*Eccl.5:18* says, “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting : to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.” I am saying that for you as a Christian, to spend your retirement years with a beach and Disneyland mindset will be a waste of your retirement years. To do so will be the epitome of selfishness, a selfishness that borders very closely on idolatry.

Parallel to your working, investing, saving and planning, you should set about to systematically prepare to serve the Lord in your retirement years. You should do so by investing time in theological studies and gaining useful experience from ongoing service in the church. One book at a time, one course at a time, you will be surprised how much you can learn and accomplish. **Gary Brady** wrote in his commentary on **Proverbs**, “*Time spent in preparation is not time wasted. ... We need to master wise ways before we start giving wise advice.*”

God may not call you to a life of full-time ministry. But neither will your wasting of your retirement years in eating, drinking and being merry be acceptable to Him. The parable of the rich fool speaks to this matter. Here was a man who made so much money

he was able to retire early. In his life he had no time for God. And in his retirement he had no time for God. He worked as if there was no God. And he made plans to retire as if there was no God. His plan was, "I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry".” But what was the Lord’s response? We read, “But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now, who will own what you have prepared?”” (*Lk.12:19-20*).

The Christian who is maturing and begun that journey to retirement should become a rich reservoir of increasing knowledge, wisdom, understanding, insight and discernment which they should seek to pass on to the younger generations. If you refuse to do so, do not be surprised if the Lord cuts short your life. And the question you will face is : who will benefit from your rich reservoir? The sad answer will be : no one!

In *Tit.2:4* the older Christian women are commanded to train the younger Christian women. In *Psa.78:5-7* we read these words, “For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and tell them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” What are your plans for your retirement years?

*Dan.12:3* says, “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Are you planning to shine for the glory of God in your retirement years?

## **Prepare To Die.**

The third point I want to set before you is that as a Christian you should prepare to die. The basic and most important preparation for death is that you are a Christian. But preparing to die as a Christian involves more than conversion to Christ. Turn to **2Tim.4:6-8. (read)**. The context here is Paul's second imprisonment. Paul said, "the time of my departure has come." In other words, I am ready to die.

In **Phil.1:21-26** Paul was not ready to die. Paul knew that if he had died during his first imprisonment that would have been much better for him. But he was not ready to die. So he chose and prayed for life on earth and further service to God and the people of God. There was work to be done. For this reason Paul was not ready to die, be imprisoned indefinitely or retire.

But now, in **2Tim.4**, Paul is in prison a second time. He knows that the work the Lord called him to do is finished. And so, he is ready to die. But note carefully, he is not dying an unfulfilled man. He is not dying with his mission unfinished. He is not dying, leaving behind a life of regrets, a life of what-might-have-beens. He said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." Paul's verbs are all perfect tenses. The perfect tense conveys a sense of finality. There are no more fights for Paul to fight. There is no other race for Paul to run. Paul has remained faithful to the Lord, to the gospel, to his calling and to the pursuit of a holy life. Paul is finished, fulfilled and ready to die.

What about you? Are you preparing to die? Are you fighting the good fight? Are you running this race with steadfast perseverance? Are you keeping the faith? When your day comes, will you be finished, fulfilled and ready? Or will you be looking back with regrets? Will you be looking back at wasted opportunities? Will you be looking back knowing that you did not fight the fights God brought into your life; you did not run the races He called you to run; you did not keep the faith by being faithful to the Lord and the demands of the gospel?

**What is death?** Paul describes death in *2Cor.5:1* as the tearing down of this earthly tent which is our body. In *2Tim.4:6* Paul wrote, “the time of my departure has come.” Death is “departure”. Note the verb “has come”. It is a perfect tense verb. What Paul was saying is : there is no turning back now. The gates of my life on this earth have been finally and permanently shut. Death is “departure”. Death is saying “goodbye” and turning around and saying “hello”. Death is closing your eyes on this side and opening them on the other side. The Lord Jesus said in *Lk.16:22-23*, “the rich man died and ... in Hades he lifted up his yes, being in torment.” Paul said in *2Cor.5:8* that death is being absent from the body and being present with the Lord.

There is no tunnel of lights. There is no long maze-like journey. There is no hanging around until some priest sets your soul free with his hocus pocus rituals. Death is not a Hollywood movie. Let me make it clear : when the wicked die, they open their eyes in Hades like the rich man where they are kept until the final judgment. When the Christian die, they open their eyes in the presence of the Lord and there they remain until the resurrection and final judgment. The dead do not become ghosts or spirits that hang around, watching over loved ones or haunting people. Ghosts or spirits are fallen angels pretending to be the spirits of those who have died. Their goal is to deceive and make people do their bidding.

When death comes, the end comes. The time for sinners to repent is now. There is no repentance after death. The time for sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is now. There is no believing in Jesus after death. There is no purgatory. No prayers, no special services, no priests, no popes can help you after you die. As a matter of fact, if you bring together every religious priest in this world, regardless of their religion or position, and they all pray together for a day, a week, a month, a year or a lifetime, they cannot deliver one sinner who has died from the hands of the living God. Abraham made it clear to the man suffering in Hades that he was now beyond all help.

There is no time sentence in hell. There is no serving your time in hell and then getting out. Hell is eternal. In *Matt.25:46* Jesus said, “These will go away into eternal

punishment.” To his dismay, the rich man discovered that you cannot get out of hell, not even for the shortest of periods. There will be no last minute conversions when the Lord Jesus returns. **2Thess.1:7** says He is returning in flaming fire. **Rev.6:16** says He is returning as the angry Lamb. **Vs.15** says when the people of this world see Him they will not repent. They will become terrified and run, seeking for places to hide. The moment the Lord Jesus appears, the wicked will know instinctively that the day of grace has ended. They will know that the door of entrance into the ark of salvation has been closed.

I say to you today, if you are not a Christian, your hope of salvation is today. Your opportunity to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is today. Do not wait for the Lord to close the door of hope on you. The Lord declared in **Gen.6:3**, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever.” **Prov.1:28** says there comes a time in a person’s life when he / she will call but the Lord will not answer. He / she will diligently seek the Lord, but you wouldn’t be able to find Him.

This is why **Isa.55:6-7** says, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

There are several examples in the Bible of those whom the Lord abandoned. But the saddest example is King Saul. Just before he died in battle, Saul testified, “God has departed from me and longer answers me.” (**1Sam.28:15**). What a frightening fact to know that death is coming, that the time of your departure has come, and to know also that God has abandoned you! If you are not a Christian this morning, do not delay. There is grave danger in putting off repentance of your sins and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

## **The Hopes For The Future.**

We come to the final major point in our study which I have entitled : **The hopes for the future.** What are the Christian's hopes for the future? The Lord's promise in *Isa.46:4* is, "Even to your old age I will be the same, And even to your graying years I will bear you!" What are the Christian's hopes for the future? Let me summarize. They are Christ's second coming, resurrection the redemption of our bodies, and the glories of heaven. When Christ returns, the perishable will put on the imperishable, the mortal will put on immortality. When Christ returns, death will be swallowed up in victory. (cf. *1Cor.15:50-57*).

When the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins, we are told in *Isa.53:5*, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed." When the Lord saves you, the first stage of your redemption is accomplished in this life. You are justified. Your sins are forgiven. Your sins are washed away by the blood of Christ. Peace with God is established. You have received the first fruits of the Spirit. In this sense, you are ready for heaven.

There yet remains, however, the second stage of your redemption, and that is, the redemption of your body. This is expressed in the statement, "by His scourging we are healed." Yes, there is healing in the redemption. But that healing is not in this life. In this life, we are living in a fallen world in fallen bodies in which sin dwells. The consequences of sin are still at work in our bodies. These consequences, as we saw, are aging, sicknesses of all kinds and eventually death.

Turn to *Rom.8:22-23*. (**read**). We who already have "the first fruits of the Spirit" are groaning for and eagerly awaiting "our adoption as sons", that is, "the redemption of our body." Turn to *2Cor.5:1-2*. (**read**). Why are we groaning? Because we are "longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven." Now let us go to *1Cor.15:50-57*. (**read**). Finally, let us go to *Rev.21:1-5*. (**read**).

When will the redemption of our bodies take place? It will take place at the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. Believers who die in Christ live in Christ's presence as disembodied spirits. They await the resurrection when they will receive their resurrected or redeemed bodies.

There is a day coming, the day of Christ's return, when the resurrection will take place. On that day those of us who are alive will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. On that day the redemption of our bodies will take place. On that day all the consequences of sin on our bodies will be wiped away. There will be no more sickness, no more pain, no more crying, no more mourning, no more suffering, no more death. The Lord would have made all things new for those of us who became new in Christ when we were saved.

Those of you who are doing the eschatology module learned that God divided the history of the world and time into two ages : this age and the age to come; the already and the not yet. Now, what you also learned is that the age to come, the not yet, has broken into this age, the already, the now. The primary evidence of this is that our Lord Jesus Christ is the resurrected reigning Lord. There are other aspects of the age to come that manifest themselves from time to time in this present age, giving us a little taste here and a little taste there of the glories that await us.

One example is the peculiar manifestation of Christ's presence with His church. There are those times when we know the Lord was especially and peculiarly present as we worshipped Him. Some may experience such a peculiar manifestation of Christ's presence during one or more of their devotional times.

Another example is healing. From time to time the Lord may choose to heal someone. Such miraculous healing does not pre-empt you from future illnesses and will not stop aging and death. Such miraculous healing is not a promise, assurance or guarantee that every Christian will be healed and that Christians should be able to live without getting sick. But such healing points to what await us in the age to come.

In the light of these things, **how should the Christian live?** The Christian should live with the eye of faith fixed on the age to come and the glorious fulfillment that await us. The Christian should live knowing that “weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.” (*Psa.30:5*). The Christian should live knowing that this “momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.” (*2Cor.4:17*).

Note the contrasts in *2Cor.4:17* : momentary as opposed to eternal; light affliction as opposed to weight of glory far beyond all comparison. The word “**light**” tells us that the afflictions of this life are like a weightless trifle. They are feather-like. “Far beyond all comparison” is literally “**from excess unto excess.**” This weighty glory moves from excess unto excess. This brings to mind *1Cor.2:9*, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

The Lord Jesus prayed in *Jn.17:24*, “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me.” The Christian should live knowing that one day he / she will be with Christ. *Psa.11:7* says, “The upright will behold His face.” *Psa.17:15* says, “I shall behold Your face in righteousness.” *Psa.16:11* says, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

The Christian life is a life of tensions. We are living in this age and in a real sense we are already living in the age to come. We are sanctified and ready for heaven but we are also being sanctified and being made ready for heaven. The work of God’s saving grace in us is complete and yet God is continuing to work in us, perfecting us for the day of Christ. In view of this tension, the Christian should pray with groaning for the redemption of his / her body. The Christian should be longing to be clothed with “our dwelling from heaven.” But at the same time the Christian should be praying that God would grant him / her the seventy allotted years and the privilege to live a fulfilled and satisfying life to the glory of His Name.

When the time of your departure comes, you want to have that sense that you accomplished all that the Lord gave you to do. We have seen the example of Paul already. In ***Jn.17:4*** we find Jesus' example. Jesus said, "I have glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work You have given Me to do."

For our final point please turn to ***1Jn.3:1-3***. (**read**). Note those words, "it has not appeared as yet what we will be." What the future age holds for us, we really do not know. What we have in the Bible is human language struggling to describe the indescribable. What we do know is that we will be like our glorious Lord. Now here is John's point : the glories of the future age and the return of our glorious Lord give us hope. And this hope must produce in us an ethical response in this life. John wrote, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Do you have the future hopes we have talked about? Are you living in hope for Christ's return, resurrection and all the glorious blessings that come with the resurrection? Are these hopes motivating you to live a holy life? Are these hopes pressing upon you to pursue a holy life? Are these hopes giving you the desire for a life devoted to the Lord?

***2Pet.3:13*** says, "we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." Peter says, if you are looking for this new and righteous place, you will "be diligent to be found in Him in peace, spotless and blameless." (***vs.14***).

I want to warn you that the truths in God's word must have spiritual and ethical applications in your life. They must impact and change your conduct. The second coming of Christ is not taught to tantalize and titillate your minds with mysteries and dates to be unlocked. The second coming of Christ is taught to warn you that final judgment is coming and the awesome fact that you need to get ready for the Judge and the final judgment. The second coming is taught to warn you that if you are not saved you will be cast into hell for all eternity. The second coming is taught to warn you that if

you are not pursuing righteousness in this life, you will not enter the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells.

May the Holy Spirit graciously grant you wisdom, insight and understanding in these matters we have looked at today.