

## IX. Aging and Death

- A. As we grow older, it is inevitable that our bodies will grow weaker (no athlete has ever failed to retire from professional sports!)
1. Greater opportunity to trust in Christ for effectiveness in ministry, in life  
2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
  2. Opportunity for continual growth in holiness of life, spiritual maturity, prayer  
2 Corinthians 4:16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
  3. There is always a way to do what is pleasing to God, what he asks of us, each day  
1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
- B. Why do Christians grow old and die?
1. Death does not come because God is punishing us  
Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
  2. Death is the final outcome of living in a fallen world
    - a. God hasn't yet removed all evil and suffering from the world.  
1 Corinthians 15:24 Then (at Christ's return) comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death .... 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"  
Christians are not protected from all sicknesses, floods, storms, earthquakes, etc., and the farms and gardens of Christians still grow as many weeds as the farms of non-Christians.
    - b. God does not give us all the benefits of our salvation at once.  
Philippians 3:13 ... one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.
  3. God uses our experience of death to complete our sanctification  
Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.  
Hebrews 12:6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." .... 10 ...but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.
  4. Our experience of death also completes our union with Christ  
Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.  
1 Peter 4:13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.  
Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,  
Hebrews 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.  
1 Peter 2:21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.
- C. Therefore continuing in faithful obedience to God is more important than avoiding suffering or just trying to preserve our own lives  
Acts 21:13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."  
Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (compare Acts 14:19-22)  
Philippians 1:20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Hebrews 11:35 Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life.

Revelation 2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 12:11 And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

→ But sometimes physical damage to the brain can cause a Christian to act strangely at the end of life

D. When believers die, we go immediately into the Lord's presence

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Acts 7:59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Hebrews 2:15 ... and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

E. Yet it is not wrong to grieve over our loss of fellowship with those who have died (it is right!)

Acts 8:2 Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him.

John 11:35 Jesus wept.

Acts 20:37 And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, 38 being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Philippians 2:27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

1. When people die who were or may have been unbelievers, it is still right to recall the good things about their lives (note David's example in speaking well of Saul after Saul died: 2 Sam. 1:19-25)

-- we might not know the spiritual situation of a person who had heard the gospel but was not part of a church at the time of death

2. When believers die, our sorrow and grief are mixed with joy and triumph

1 Corinthians 15:55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

F. Is cremation wrong?

1. The Bible does not give any commands about how we should treat a person's body after death

2. But there are patterns of treating a person's body with dignity and respect up to and including the time of burial: 1 Sam. 31:11-12 (Saul); 1 Kgs. 13:29-30 (prophet); Mar. 6:29 (John the Baptist); Luke 23:56 (Jesus); John 19:38-42 (Jesus)

3. There are many ways this can be done according to what is understood in each culture to signify respect and honor for the memory of the person who has died

4. Therefore I do not think cremation is necessarily wrong

a. Sometimes a family may think it is the wisest decision, because it can be the most economical choice, or because in some places cemetery land is scarce, or for other reasons

b. The body is eventually going to die and disintegrate anyway (except for bones)

c. But care should be taken not to imply that you think there will be no resurrection of the very same body that was buried (when Jesus rose from the dead, his same body was raised up, and ours will be too)

d. When Jesus returns, our very bodies that have been buried (what is left of them) will be raised from the dead and restored to perfect health, great physical attractiveness, and eternal life (1 Cor. 15:23, 42-44; 51-52; Phil. 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:16).

e. For unbelievers, there will be a resurrection for judgment (Dan 12:2 Matt. 12:41; John 5:29; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:5, 12-13)

5. We also should avoid a different kind of mistake: Spending excessive money on a casket, perhaps out of misplaced guilt or a futile hope that the person's body will never decay.

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