

# Life's Too Short!

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## Introduction

Sacred Scripture affirms the brevity of life and the certainty of death. The Patriarch Job poetically described life's transience when he said, "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle... My days are but a breath... Our days on earth are as a shadow. When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. He will not return again to his house, nor will his place know him anymore. My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They slip by like reed boats, like an eagle that swoops on its prey. Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain" (Job 7:6-10, 16; 8:9; 9:25-26; 14:1-2).

*Job 7:6-10 (NASB95) — 6 "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, And come to an end without hope. 7 "Remember that my life is but breath; My eye will not again see good. 8 "The eye of him who sees me will behold me no longer; Your eyes will be on me, but I will not be. 9 "When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, So he who goes down to Sheol does not come up. 10 "He will not return again to his house, Nor will his place know him anymore.*

*Job 7:16 (NASB95) — 16 "I waste away; I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath.*

*Job 8:9 (NASB95) — 9 "For we are only of yesterday and know nothing, Because our days on earth are as a shadow.*

*Job 9:25-26 (NASB95) — 25 "Now my days are swifter than a runner; They flee away, they see no good. 26 "They slip by like reed boats, Like an eagle that swoops on its prey.*

*Job 14:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 "Man, who is born of woman, Is short-lived and full of turmoil. 2 "Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain.*

The Book of Psalms echoes this same theme: "Lord, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am. Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; surely every man at his best is a mere breath" (Psa. 39:4-5). "Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes and does not return" (Psa. 78:39). "My days are like a lengthened shadow, and I wither away like grass" (Psa. 102:11). "For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, and its place acknowledges it no longer" (Psa. 103:14-16).

*Psalm 39:4-5 (NASB95) — 4 “Lord, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient I am. 5 “Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath. Selah.*

*Psalm 78:39 (NASB95) — 39 Thus He remembered that they were but flesh, A wind that passes and does not return.*

*Psalm 102:11 (NASB95) — 11 My days are like a lengthened shadow, And I wither away like grass.*

*Psalm 103:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes. 16 When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.*

Life is too short to squander it, too precious to waste it, too important to fritter it away. As the old song says, “Swiftly we’re turning life’s daily pages, swiftly the hours are changing to years; How are we using God’s golden moments? Shall we reap glory? Shall we reap tears?”<sup>i</sup>

## **Life Is Too Short For Worry**

Many people worry needlessly. They are anxious, bedeviled and beleaguered. Like Archie Bunker from *All In The Family*, many folks are constantly stressed out. Edith once said of her husband, “Archie doesn’t know how to worry without getting upset.”<sup>ii</sup> How true. Life is too short for this. Not only is worry senseless, it also is faithless. Let us learn to trust in God (Matt. 6:25-33; Luke 10:40-42; Phil. 4:4-9).

*Matthew 6:25-33 (NASB95) — 25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 “Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? 27 “And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? 28 “And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, 29 yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. 30 “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! 31 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ 32 “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

*Luke 10:40-42 (NASB95) — 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one*

*thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”*

*Philippians 4:4-9 (NASB95) — 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.*

## **Life Is Too Short For Hatred**

Many people are consumed by hatred. Their hearts are filled with bitterness and gall. Their tongues are poisoned with venom and vindictiveness. Life is too short for this. Hatred stirs up strife and dissension (Prov. 10:12; cf. 10:18; 15:17). Harry Emerson Fosdick said, “Hating people is like burning down your own house to get rid of a rat.”<sup>iii</sup> The one who hates stumbles in the darkness (1 John 2:9-11). Those who cling to malice forfeit their hope of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

*Proverbs 10:12 (NASB95) — 12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions.*

*Proverbs 10:18 (NASB95) — 18 He who conceals hatred has lying lips, And he who spreads slander is a fool.*

*Proverbs 15:17 (NASB95) — 17 Better is a dish of vegetables where love is Than a fattened ox served with hatred.*

*1 John 2:9-11 (NASB95) — 9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

*Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB95) — 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

What is the solution to the problem? Love and Forgiveness (Matt. 5:43-44; 1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:31-32). Let our prayer be like that of the ancient poet: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.”<sup>iv</sup>

*Matthew 5:43-44 (NASB95) — 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*

*1 Corinthians 14:20 (NASB95) — 20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.*

*Ephesians 4:31-32 (NASB95) — 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

## **Life Is Too Short For Inactivity**

Many people squander opportunities for service. Like the Cretans of old, many today are lazy gluttons (Titus 1:12-13). Like the Proverbial sluggard, many today deal with a slack hand, and justify their indolence with easy excuses (Prov. 20:4; 22:13). They are lackadaisical and lethargic (Prov. 19:24; 26:14). Their motto is, “Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow.” Dormant and dilatory, they drift through life unconcerned with their duty and indifferent to the needs of others.

*Titus 1:12-13 (NASB95) — 12 One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” 13 This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith,*

*Proverbs 20:4 (NASB95) — 4 The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing.*

*Proverbs 22:13 (NASB95) — 13 The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!”*

*Proverbs 19:24 (NASB95) — 24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish, But will not even bring it back to his mouth.*

*Proverbs 26:14 (NASB95) — 14 As the door turns on its hinges, So does the sluggard on his bed.*

Life is too short for this. Let us learn the lesson of the ants (Prov. 6:6-11), and share the energetic spirit of the Savior (John 9:4). Christians must be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). Centuries ago, Philip Doddridge penned the following hymn: “Awake my soul! stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on; A heavenly race demands thy zeal and an immortal crown.”<sup>v</sup> Let us serve Jesus with fervor and devotion (Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:11-12).

*Proverbs 6:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise, 7 Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler, 8 Prepares her food in the summer And gathers her provision in the harvest. 9 How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? 10 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the*

*hands to rest”— 11 Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.*

*John 9:4 (NASB95) — 4 “We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.*

*Titus 2:14 (NASB95) — 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*

*Romans 12:11 (NASB95) — 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;*

*1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB95) — 58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.*

*Hebrews 6:11-12 (NASB95) — 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 so that you will not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

## **Life Is Too Short For Indecision**

Many people delay subjecting their lives unto God until it is too late. They procrastinate and postpone the hour of their obedience. Two vivid examples are Felix and Agrippa (Acts 24:24-25; 26:26-29). As William James once said, “There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision.”<sup>vi</sup>

*Acts 24:24-25 (NASB95) — 24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. 25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”*

*Acts 26:26-29 (NASB95) — 26 “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. 27 “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” 28 Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” 29 And Paul said, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”*

Life is too short for this. We live but one day at a time, but eternity hangs on that one day. Obey God while there is time and opportunity (2 Cor. 6:1-2; Heb. 3:7-15). Paul commands, “Redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16). G. Campbell Morgan said, “Let the year be given to God in its every moment! The year is made up of minutes: let these be watched as having been dedicated to God! It is in the sanctification of the small that hallowing of the large is secure.”<sup>vii</sup>

*2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NASB95) — 1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2 for He says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”—*

*Hebrews 3:7-15 (NASB95) — 7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, And saw My works for forty years. 10 “Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways’; 11 As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ ” 12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, 15 while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.”*

*Ephesians 5:16 (NASB95) — 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

## **Conclusion**

Indeed, life is brief. Like water spilled on the ground that cannot be recovered, so we must die (2 Sam. 14:14). Like a mist that appears for a little while, we soon vanish away (James 4:13-17). Live life to the fullest, seizing the day, grasping the moment! Yet, may we continually live in view of the judgment (Eccl. 9:9; 11:9-12:4; 12:13-14). May God help us to number our days unto wisdom (Psa. 90:5-12).

*2 Samuel 14:14 (NASB95) — 14 “For we will surely die and are like water spilled on the ground which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away life, but plans ways so that the banished one will not be cast out from him.*

*James 4:13-17 (NASB95) — 13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. 15 Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. 17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.*

*Ecclesiastes 9:9 (NASB95) — 9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.*

*Ecclesiastes 11:9-12:4 (NASB95) — 9 Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things. 10 So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from*

*your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting. 1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; 2 before the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; 3 in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; 4 and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.*

*Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. 14 For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

*Psalms 90:5-12 (NASB95) — 5 You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; In the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. 6 In the morning it flourishes and sprouts anew; Toward evening it fades and withers away. 7 For we have been consumed by Your anger And by Your wrath we have been dismayed. 8 You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your presence. 9 For all our days have declined in Your fury; We have finished our years like a sigh. 10 As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, Or if due to strength, eighty years, Yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away. 11 Who understands the power of Your anger And Your fury, according to the fear that is due You? 12 So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom.*

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i "Into Our Hands," *Sacred Selections*, No. 90.

ii Edith Bunker, quoted in *Peter's Quotations*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1979), p. 540.

iii Harry Emerson Fosdick, quoted in *Peter's Quotations*, p. 236.

iv St. Francis of Assisi (ca. A.D. 1181-1226), quoted in *Bartlett's*, p. 138:15.

v Philip Doddridge (A.D. 1702-1751), quoted in *Bartlett's*, p. 346:1.

vi William James (A.D. 1842-1910), quoted in *Bartlett's*, p. 648:8.

vii G. Campbell Morgan, quoted in *The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations*, (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1965), p. 444.