

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).

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).

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?"ⁱ

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."ⁱⁱ 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).

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."ⁱⁱⁱ 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).

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.”^{iv}

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.

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.”^v Let us serve Jesus with fervor and devotion (Rom. 12:11; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:11-12).

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.”^{vi}

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.”^{vii}

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).

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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.