

J.R. Miller:

We are not merely bodies. There is a life within our body which goes on when the body has ceased to exist. The inner man does not wear outâ€”as the body wastes away. It does not grow old, nor become feeble with the years. The inner life is not dependent on the outer. One may be physically broken and decrepit, and yet spiritually strong. Paul states this truth when he says, "Though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day." The outer may be destroyed, and the man still live on.

"I will kill you!" said the emperor in his rage to an undismayed follower of Christ, standing before him. "That you cannot do," said the Christian, "for my life is hid with Christ in God!"

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." 2 Corinthians 4:16. "For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die!" 1 Corinthians 15:53

The lesson of the imperishable life, has a special application to those who suffer from sickness or from any bodily affliction. It will help us to endure physical sufferings quietly and uncomplainingly, if we will remember that it is only the outward man that can be touched and affected by these experiences, and that the inward man may not only be kept unharmed, but may be growing all the while in beauty and strength, being spiritually renewed through pain and suffering.

A poor shoemaker in his dreary little shop in a great city, one day noticed that there was one little place in his dark room, from which he could get a view of green fields, blue skies and faraway hills. He wisely set up his bench at that point, so that at any moment he could lift his eyes from his dull workâ€”and have a glimpse of the great, beautiful world outside.

Just so, from the darkest sick-room, and from the midst of the keenest sufferings, there is always a point from which we can see the face of Christ and have a glimpse of the glory of heaven. If only we will find this place and get this visionâ€”it will make it easy to endure even the greatest suffering.

"For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken downâ€”when we die and leave these bodiesâ€”we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long for the day when we will put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing." 2 Corinthians 5:1-2

Sickness is discouraging and is hard to bear. But we should remember that the doing of the will of God is always the noblest, holiest thing we can do any hourâ€”however hard it may be for us. If we are called to sufferâ€”let us suffer patiently and sweetly. Under all our sharp trialsâ€”let us keep the peace of God in our hearts. Under the snows of suffering, let us cherish the fairest, gentlest growths of spiritual life. The outward man may indeed decayâ€”but the inward man will be renewed day by day.

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." 2 Corinthians 4:16.

Paul's teaching has an application to those who are growing old. He was an old man when he wrote these triumphant words. As a missionary he had traveled over many lands to carry the gospel to lost men. He had been exposed to storms, illnesses and fierce persecutions. He had suffered all manner of hardships, and was a broken man, physically. The 'old house' he had lived in so longâ€”was battered and shattered. But while his body was thus worn outâ€”the outward man decayingâ€”his inward man was strong, undecaying, triumphant!

The problem of Christian old ageâ€”is to keep the heart young and full of hope and of all youth's gladness, however feeble and broken the body may become. We need to be most watchful, however, lest we allow our life to lose its zest and deteriorate in its quality, when old age begins to creep in. The best, then, seems behind usâ€”and there is less to draw us on. Hopes of achievement appear to be ended for usâ€”our work is almost done, we think.

Sometimes people, as they grow old, become less sweet and less beautiful in spirit. Troubles, disasters and misfortunes, have made the days hard and painful for them. Perhaps health is broken, and suffering is added to the other elements that make the old age unhappy.

With many, their life of youthful hopes, dreams, successes, loves and joysâ€”has been sunk out of sight, submerged in misfortunes and adversities, and has vanished altogether. Nothing remains of it all, but a memory. Their hearts have grown hopeless and bitter.

But this is not worthy livingâ€”for those who are immortal, who are true children of God. These hard things are not meant to mar our lifeâ€”they are meant to make us all the braver, the worthier, the nobler!

It is not meant that the infirmities of old age shall break through into our inner life. Our hearts should grow all the more beautiful, the more the outer life is broken. The shattering of the old mortal tent, should reveal more and more of the glory of the divine life that dwells within!

Do you ever think, you who are growing oldâ€”that old age ought really to be the very best of life? We are too apt to settle down to the feeling that in our infirmities, we cannot any longer live beautifully, worthily, usefully or actively. But this is not the true way to think of old age. We should reach our best then, in every way.

Old age should be the bestâ€”the very best, of all life!

It should be the most beautiful, with . . .
the flaws mended,
the faults cured,
the mistakes corrected,
the lessons all well learned.

Youth is full of immaturity, mid-life is full of toil and care, strife and ambition. Old age should be as the autumn, with its golden fruit. When we grow oldâ€”we ought to be better Christians than ever we have been beforeâ€”more submissive to God's will, more content, more patient and gentle, kindlier and more loving! We are drawing nearer to heaven every day, and our visions of the Father's house should be clearer and brighter.

Old age should always be the best of life in its harvest, not marked by emptiness and decayâ€”but by richer fruitfulness and more gracious beauty. It may be lonely, with so many gone, of those who used to cluster about the life; but the loneliness will not be for long, for it is drawing nearer continually to all the great company of waiting ones in heaven.

Old age may be feebleâ€”but the marks of feebleness are really foretokens of glory. Dr. Guthrie, as his life grew feeble, spoke of his thin locks, his trembling steps, his dullness of hearing, his dimness of eyeâ€”as like the appearing of 'land birds', telling the weary mariner that he was nearing the haven!

Aged Christians have no reason for sadness; they are really in their best days. Let them be sure to live now at their best.

Paul was growing old when he wrote of his enthusiastic vision of beauty yet to be attainedâ€”but we hear no note of complaint or weariness from him. He did not think of his life as done. He showed no consciousness that he had passed the highest reach of living. He was still forgetting the pastâ€”and reaching forward, because he knew that his best was yet before him. His outward man was feeble, his health shattered, his physical vigor decayingâ€”but the inner man was undecayed and undecaying. He was never before so Christlike as he was now, never so full of hope, never so enthusiastic in his service of his Master.

Those who are growing old should rise . . .
to holiest joy,
to most triumphant faith,
to sweetest love,
to most rapturous praise, and
should attain the ripest spiritual fruitfulness!

They should do their best work for Christ, in the days that remain for them. They should live their gentlest, sweetest, kindest, most helpful lifeâ€”in the time they have yet to stay in this world. They should make their years of old ageâ€”years of quietness, of peace; a glad, holy repose in Jesus. In trust and peace, they should nestle like a little child in the everlasting arms that are underneath them, and give out to all who are about themâ€”the sweetest love, the holiest joy, the most blessed hope. But this can be the story of their experience, only if their life is hidden with Christ in God. Apart from Christâ€”no life can keep its zest or its radiance!

"For our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die!" 1 Corinthians 15:53

Those who are younger, may do much to add to the zest and gladness of old people. They are lonely. Nearly all of the friends who used to brighten their lives with their companionship, are gone. Yet the hunger for love remains. Blessed are the old who are surrounded by happy young people who are loving and willing enough to show them attention, to be affectionate to them, to give time and thought to them. Old people never get beyond the need of gentle kindness, nor reach a time when they do not care any more for love's expressions.

This lesson has its comforts also for the believer in death. Some good people dread death. It seems extinction, the end of all. Oh, no! it is the end of nothingâ€”but sin and mortality! "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." When the body diesâ€”the spirit, the immortal part, escapes out of its dissolved dwelling-place, to live forever with Christ. Dying hurts no believer. It is emancipation, "absent from the bodyâ€”at home with the Lord!"

Fear nothingâ€”if your life is hidden with Christ in God. The things that can decayâ€”only make the undecaying things more manifest. When the earth perishesâ€”heaven will be seen as our final, imperishable home.

Life is a burdenâ€”bear it;

Life is a dutyâ€”dare it;

Life is a thorn-crownâ€”wear it.

Though it break your heart in twain,

Though the burden crush you down;

Close your lips and hide your pain;

First the crossâ€”and then the crown!