

Aging and Death

Chapter 24

- I. As we grow older, it is inevitable that our bodies will grow weaker (no athlete has ever failed to retire from professional sports!)
 - A. Greater opportunity to trust in Christ for effectiveness in ministry and in life.
 1. 2 Corinthians 12:9
 - B. Opportunity for continual growth in holiness of life, spiritual maturity, prayer
 1. 2 Corinthians 4:16
 - C. There is always a way to do what is pleasing to God, what he asks of us, each day
 1. 1 Corinthians 10:13
- II. Why do Christians grow old and die?
 - A. Death does not come because God is punishing us
 1. Romans 8:1
 - B. Death is the final outcome of living in a fallen world
 1. God hasn't yet removed all evil and suffering from the world.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:24
 2. God does not give us all the benefits of our salvation at once.
 - a. Philippians 3:13
 - C. God uses our experience of death to complete our sanctification
 1. Romans 8:28
 2. Hebrews 12:6
 - D. Our experience of death also completes our union with Christ
 1. Romans 8:17
 2. 1 Peter 4:13
 3. Philippians 3:10
 4. Hebrews 12:2
 5. 1 Peter 2:21
- III. Therefore continuing in faithful obedience to God is more important than avoiding

suffering or just trying to preserve our own lives

- A. Acts 21:13
- B. Acts 20:24 (compare Acts 14:19-22)
- C. Philippians 1:20
- D. Hebrews 11:35
- E. Revelation 2:10
- F. Revelation 12:11

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

- A. Philippians 1:21
- B. Acts 7:59
- C. Hebrews 2:15

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

- A. Acts 8:2
- B. John 11:35
- C. Acts 20:37
- D. Philippians 2:27
- E. 1 Thessalonians 4:13
 - a. 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)
- F. When believers die, our sorrow and grief are mixed with joy and triumph
 - a. 1 Corinthians 15:55
 - b. Revelation 14:13
 - c. Psalm 116:15

VI. Is cremation wrong?

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

- C. 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
- D. Therefore I do not think cremation is necessarily wrong
 - 1. 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
 - 2. The body is eventually going to die and disintegrate anyway (except for bones)
 - a. 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)
 - b. 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).
 - c. 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)
- E. 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.