

The Theology of Ageing / Old Age

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Psalm 90

- 1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
throughout all generations.
- 2 Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the whole world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God. ...
- 10 Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures; ...
- 12 Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Old age / later life – it's all relative

Are you old? What about God?

Are you in later life / the second half of life? What about God?

Ageing / old age / later life are relative to **God** (who started before everything) and **Death** (which is coming to everyone)

A good theology of ageing requires that we ...

Stop avoiding the subjects of God and Death

Be honest and real about the inescapability of God and Death

Live in the Image of the Ancient of Days – relating to God

Live in the Valley of the Shadow of Death – relating to Death

Focus upon Christ – who lived as the Image of God in the Land of Death

A good theology of ageing ...

Right now, I am in the presence of God whose invitation to me and demand upon me are total

Sometime – I don't know when – I shall die

God is here, now. I am going to die. And I relate to the God of Life and the Shadow of Death IN CHRIST.

Living in the Image of the Ancient of Days

Daniel 7; Psalm 90; Job 12.12; Prov 16.31; Lev 19.32; Titus 2.2; Prov 3.1-2; Psalm 91.16; Psalm 92.14

- Wisdom
- Stability
- Authority
- Honour and glory

Living in the Valley of the Shadow of Death

Psalm 71.9; Ecclesiastes 12; past child-bearing; blindness; taste and hearing

- Death is coming
- Time is limited – priorities and opportunities (Jacob, Simeon, Anna, Paul, Peter)
- Capacity is diminishing
- Dependence is increasing

The Lord Jesus Christ and Later Life

He did not experience many of the common forms of old age. But note in and from Christ:

- a) The significance of later life / the end of life
- b) The significance of 'passion' (dependence; things being 'done' to you; not being all about agency, activity, autonomy, achievement)

The Lord Jesus Christ and Later Life

Later life may be marked less by activity, achievement, agency, and autonomy. It may be marked more by accepting, letting go, and waiting. And if so, it is the PERFECT moment for learning to be as children which is essential to being in the kingdom (Matt 18), for deepening poverty of spirit which is the first of all blessednesses (Matt 5), for relinquishing everything which is the condition of discipleship (Luke 14), and for patterning our Philippians 3 life according to the shape of Jesus's Philippians 2 life.

Our identity, our security, our priority, our dignity is NOT found in our activity or achievement but in a stance of humble openness to God, of grateful dependence upon God, and of trustful submission to God. This is the ESSENCE of right living and later life, the second half is the PERFECT time to learn and experience that. It's no wonder that the second half of life is, in psychology, a phenomenon in its own right.



HEARING • BECOMING • SERVING



Jesus at the End of Life

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”

– the end of life is a time for calm-spirited coming to terms with people who’ve wronged you and pains which have hurt you – by talking to your heavenly Father about them

Jesus at the End of Life

“Dear woman, here is your son ... Here is your mother”

– marked by realism and gentleness, the end of life is a time for caring for others, preparing them for our death, and ‘putting our affairs in order’

Jesus at the End of Life

“I tell you the truth. Today you will be with me in paradise”

– the end of life can be a time when speaking just a few words of good news will bring comfort and blessing to others

Jesus at the End of Life

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

– the end of life is a time for being honest and out loud with God about our pain, confusion, loneliness, and loss

Jesus at the End of Life

“I thirst”

- taking seriously our bodily needs and depending on others to meet those needs is no loss of true dignity

Jesus at the End of Life

“It is finished”

– with fullness, not emptiness, we need not cling desperately to life but can be ready to die, just as at the end of a long day we lay our head on our pillow and are ready to sleep

Jesus at the End of Life

“Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”

– the end of life is to be marked with a trustful and confident surrender of ourselves into the Father’s arms

Summary

- God is old – live in his image in later life: wisdom and stability, honour and authority
- Death is coming – live in its shadow in later life: limited time, declining strength, and going deeper into acceptance, relinquishment, dependence, and waiting
- The Lord Jesus Christ shows us the significance of later life, the glory of relinquishment, and the pattern for the end of life. And in Him we learn true ageing: relating rightly to God in the shadow of death and relating rightly to death in the light of God.

Isaiah 46.3-4

3 Listen to me, you descendants of Jacob,
all the remnant of the people of Israel,
you whom I have upheld since your birth,
and have carried since you were born.

4 Even to your old age and gray hairs
I am he, I am he who will sustain you.
I have made you and I will carry you;
I will sustain you and I will rescue you.