

THE FUTILITY OF LIFE

The bible speaks extensively about the nature of life and its futility , calling us to reflect deeply on what really matters .

The Brevity of Life

Scripture reminds us time and time again of the “**shortness of life**”. The psalmist says in Psalm 39:5 that our lives are like a mere breath—here today and gone tomorrow. Life is fleeting.

Solomon in Ecclesiastes 6:12 asks, ***“For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow?”***

Scriptures compare life on earth to many things, so that we may realize how BRIEF life is, how SHORT time is, and how important it is for us to number our days, properly prioritize our plans, and apply our hearts to wisdom and understanding.

Job 14: 1-2 — ***“Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure.”***

James 4:14— ***“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”***

1 Peter 1:24 –***For, “All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall,***

These scriptures illustrate that life on earth is as brief as “few days”! The brevity of life is displayed through the pictures of:

Flower: There is a flower called ‘*Queen of the Night*’ which blooms in one night, releases a sweet fragrance, and is dead and withered by morning!

Vanishing Vapour: “Life is like the mist on the mountainside. The sun rises, and the mist is gone.

Fleeing shadow: empty, uncertain and unstable (Job 14: 1-2).

Wind: that passes so quickly and swiftly, it is seen no more, as if it never passed (Job 7:7; Psa.78:39).

Cloud: which comes to its height and then fizzles out. So does human life and man’s full strength (Job 7:9).

The Bible says in Psalm 102, “***My days are like the evening shadow; ...But you, LORD, sit enthroned forever; your renown endures through all generations.***”

God is from everlasting to everlasting. God had no beginning. God has no end. You had a beginning, and you have an end. In the 90th psalm we read that God allows for 70-80 years lifespan .

And that's not long, let me tell you. I was 22 yesterday , I am 66 today . The end of our days comes quicker than we can imagine.

Think of it: God will endure forever, but on earth we're all dying. From the moment you were born you started dying, because we're all heading toward death.

And what are you going to do with the years of life God is granting you ?

Solomon in the closing verses of the book of Ecclesiastes tells us that ***God will bring every deed into judgment , including every hidden thing , whether it is good or evil.***

You will stand before the great judgment of God to give an account of how you spent this life and what you did about Jesus Christ. Because God gave his Son to die for your sins because you see, we're all sinners.

We all have inherited the same disease the moment we were born. God looks at your heart. And God sees that you have a spiritual heart disease.

And that spiritual heart disease is called sin. And we're all sinners, that means we've broken the laws of God, we've disobeyed God, we've rebelled against God. And because we've rebelled against him and we're going to have to face a judgment.

It is appointed for man to die once and then face God face to face . The first person we meet after death is God . There and then God will play “the film” of our lives back to us – the good and the bad will all be exposed and judged on basis of whether we had faith or not. Faith will receive its rewards ; unbelief will receive retribution from God.

But we can escape God’s retribution and damning judgment if we trust Jesus , who bore our sins and took our judgment upon Himself.

Heaven is reserved for the saved . Hell is reserved for the unsaved . Are you saved ? This life is short and has an end. The next life is eternal, it has no end. Heaven and Hell have no end . Where will you spend your eternity ?

The Tyranny of Life

We experience the “tyranny of life” when we are caught up in its relentless demands. From work to responsibilities, from struggles to suffering, life often feels overwhelming.

“Under the sun” is a phrase used 29x by Solomon in his book of observations.

Solomon explores the weariness and futility of life lived apart from God. He describes from a secular and philosophical point of view how human efforts often feel like a never-ending cycle of labor; the monotony of life, without a divine purpose, everything seems pointless.

Humanity is running on a “treadmill”, moving all the time, but getting nowhere without God. True freedom comes when we release the pressures of this life and place our trust in God's eternal promises.

One of the most vivid illustrations of the tyranny of life comes from John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. In this allegory, the main character, Christian, carries a heavy burden (symbolizing the weight of sin and life's troubles) as he travels through the world. Bunyan writes:

“I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back.”

This burden weighs Christian down, representing the tyranny and oppression of living in sin, under the demands of the world, and outside of God's grace.

Only when Christian reaches the Cross is his burden finally removed. Bunyan's illustration is a powerful image of how life's struggles—whether from sin, guilt, or worldly pursuits—can weigh a person down like an unbearable burden.

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 6:33, ***“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,”*** this way we can overcome the tyranny of

meaningless pursuits. We are to seek those things that are “ *above the sun.* ”

The tyranny of time, it controls us and we become frustrated running from one thing to another.

The Vanity of Life

Solomon, after experiencing all the pleasures and accomplishments life had to offer, concludes that “*All is vanity*” (Ecclesiastes 1:2). 38x the word appears in the book . *Vanity of vanities* (suggests to the highest degree).

This means that without God, life’s pursuits—whether in wealth, fame, pleasure, or knowledge—are ultimately meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 2:11 says, “*Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind.*”

We work hard, accumulate possessions, and chase success, but in the end, all these things fade away, like sand that slips away between our fingers.

9 times Solomon expresses our chase for success and material things as “ *a chasing after the wind.*”

Jesus echoes this in Mark 8:36 – “*What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?*”

CH Spurgeon would say, “*This world is full of bubbles—brilliant and bright for a moment, but then gone in an instant. How many run after them, chasing the fleeting pleasures and honors of life, only to grasp at nothing. All is vanity apart from Christ.*”

Life without God is hollow, temporary, and unfulfilling. This is why the apostle John could say, "***Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.***" (1John 2:15-17)

The Urgency of Life

Because life is brief and can feel tyrannical and vain without God, there's a deep "urgency" to how we live. Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes with this profound truth, which was stated at the end of his life, "***Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man***" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). It is a warning to all of us to prioritize God in everything.

We cannot afford to live casually. Every day is a gift from God, and we are called to live with eternal purpose.

Ephesians 5:15-16— "***Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.***"

There's an urgency to time. The bible says, "***Redeem the time because the days are evil***". The days are very evil. We open our phones and TV's and we cannot believe all the wars that are going on, the shootings and the racial and religious conflicts and the drug and alcohol addictions all over the world.

To redeem the time signifies to buy the time. Buy back lost time! Be intentional and wise in how you live, don't get swept away by the distractions and temptations of a morally confused world .

Time is a precious gift . Time doesn't stand still ! Paul exhorts believers to live with a sense urgency .

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, often spoke on the urgency of life.

"You have no time to lose; see that you gather up the fragments that nothing be lost. Use all the time that God gives you as the most precious of treasures. Employ every part of it in the most useful way."

Wesley's image of time as "fragments" encourages believers to recognize that time is not infinite; it is fragmented and slipping away. The urgency is to gather those fragments, making every moment count in service to God. Do waste any time .

In placing your trust in Christ , you will realize that God has a plan and a work for you. God has assigned a work that only you can fill, you are unique, nobody can take your place.

First and foremost, every believer is called to be Christ's ambassador and has been handed over the ministry of reconciliation. We are God's chosen instruments to implore people to be reconciled to God through Christ.

We are also to live with a readiness for Christ's return, taking action today . For we are exhorted to work, watch and pray as we wait for Him .

Of course, we don't know when the time of Jesus' coming is going to be. In Mark 13 we are told " ***"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. "***

In Romans 13 the apostle says, " ***And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we***

first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

The bible several times uses the phrase, ***"The time is at hand"***.

The brevity of time calls for immediate action. The fact that time is short calls for us to do something about it now, because the scripture says in II Corinthians 6:2, ***"Now is the accepted time"***. Not tomorrow, today.

Things you ought to do, do them now. Money you ought to give, give it now. People you ought to witness to, witness now. Every time the clock ticks it seems to say, ***"Now"***.

There is a saying that goes like this : ONLY ONE LIFE, it will soon be past. Only what is done for Christ will last!

Conclusion

Life "under the sun" is temporary, but a life lived with faith in God brings eternal significance. Jesus Christ says, ***" I have come to that you may have life , and that you may have it more abundantly ."***

Psalm 90:12– ***"Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."***