The Age Old Problem

We, as university students, are the future. We hear it all the time. We are the artists, the thinkers, the carers, the innovators. We are the teachers and the listeners. We sharpen our minds and polish our skills to impress, to earn respect, and probably most of all for our own security. We need to focus on how we can use it to set up eternity on the proper order of creation.

If we are lucky enough to enjoy many years on earth, it is inevitable that we will watch our bodies slowly break down. How do we cope with this in a society that is so youth-oriented, even youth-obsessed? If you’re not convinced of this, think about the media images we are bombarded with all the time. We are sold on ads featuring teenagers and young people. Think about ads for perfume, make-up and fashion; products that supposedly sell the essence of beauty and femininity or masculinity. Marketers entice us with images of teenage models or actors without a wrinkle or sunspot. And those of us who are, well, past it, are pounced on by money-hungry marketers, who know we will give anything to revive the images of teenage models or actors.

Ageing is shameful, distasteful and unnatural. Once-idolized models and actors are quietly pushed aside to make way for younger ones. By doing so, the entertainment industry can stay enviably young. But what about the rest of us? Why do we age, and why is it such an issue for us?

Ageing is a constant degenerative condition triggered at birth. It is a curse, a medical phenomenon that scientists and evolutionists struggle to explain. Some popular scientific theories are firstly that genes have a limited life (the Hayflick Theory), they are pre-programmed to deteriorate with time, and there is no escape. And secondly, that it is the destructive free radicals we have to thank for our bent, weak backs and our wrinkles.

Evolution has even less comforting words. Evolutionists argue that to assert that the body’s cells are a slowly-ticking time bomb is to far-overstate the importance of the individual. They argue instead that the gene is the mastermind of the individual, the only unit of importance with one fundamental aim, to survive. The only way to do this is to be passed on. Once this has occurred, the individual can be disposed of. The individual need only live long enough to ensure it has a good chance of passing on its genes.

The individual. It. A random bunch of cells. This is what we are in the evolutionist’s eye. But this is far from God’s view, and the Bible gives much more satisfying answers.

In Genesis 3, we are told exactly why we age. It’s not simply because our cells have developed that way. Death has a much more profound and tragic foundation. It is the necessary consequence of a broken relationship between us and God, and with it, the whole proper order of creation was turned upside-down. But as hopeless as death may seem, there is nothing too big for God to deal with, nothing outside his plan for our good. In fact, it is through death—our spiritual death—and Jesus’ bodily death that we experience the extent of God’s grace. Ephesians reminds us that ‘All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful natures and following its desires and thoughts—like the rest, we were objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions’—it is by grace you have been saved’ (2:5).

So as we advance in our earthly years we are watching two things, the wear and tear of the temporary, and the promise of a better life approaching. In Revelation, John describes the latter like this: ‘I saw the Holy city, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”’ (21:2-4).

Youth doesn’t last. Success, if it comes, doesn’t last. Death is a certainty. But for those who trust in Jesus, a new life awaits us. Youth doesn’t last. Success, if it comes, doesn’t last. Death is a certainty. But for those who trust in Jesus, a new life awaits us; one without pain and fear, without sin and tragedy and imperfection, without weak bones and failing senses. Without decay, and without the curse of death.

The long-term goal of a species, evolutionists tell us, is to survive to the point of immortality. By spending our time and money trying to erase the effects of time, we are becoming caught up in the obsession of secular society to set up eternity on the irrelevant. We need to remind ourselves that what we are now is only temporary. Instead of seeing time as a curse, we need to focus on how we can use it to serve God, remembering that this is our purpose, and the reason we have any time at all.

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References: