

THIS OLD HOUSE

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain: In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail... Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.” Ecclesiastes 12:1-8

Ecclesiastes is one of the saddest books of the Bible. The Song of Solomon describes our early years, Proverbs deals with middle life, and Ecclesiastes was written for old age. Sadly, youth does not last forever. Life marches on with its demands of work, family, bills, and other demands of life. And, when youth begins to be replaced by age, it is a sure sign that the body is wearing out. We have all looked in the mirror expecting a certain image to appear and can't quite accept the old guy who is staring back at us. One of our members took my photo at a memorial service and sent it to me. When I saw her, I told her that I thought that I was younger and prettier than that. She curtly replied; "Well you're not!" The undying and eternal youth of the soul looks for what we used to be, but the temporal and decaying body sees quite a different reflection. The image is that of an old house that is falling down. The body is compared to a house. In these verses, Solomon paints a vivid picture of growing old.

- **The keepers of the house** - Arms and hands tremble. Arthritic fingers distort when doing simple tasks and cannot be straightened. These contortions are accompanied by severe pain.
- **The strong men** – Legs buckle, and knees wear out; toes curl, shoulders weaken and the body bends.
- **The grinders cease**- Teeth begin to fall out, or the gums recede, and your dentist will gladly pull them.
- **The windows be darkened** - Vision turns bad. Many develop cataracts in their senior years.
- **The doors shall be shut** – Closed off, shut in, nothing in common with others. Dementia, Alzheimer's, and senility reigns, or you are just a bit forgetful. Recently the wife Ginger and I had a wonderful time at a restaurant, and we shared the experience with some friends. They asked for the name of the place. I couldn't remember, but said that it had something to do with the color red. They guessed at the name suggesting it was Red Robin. I said no, it's a spice. They guessed again by saying, Cayenne, Paprika, and Turmeric. No, no, no, was my reply. Then someone said Ginger. That's it! Ginger, what was the name of that restaurant?
- **The grinding is low** - Can't chew food because of few teeth.
- **He shall rise up at the voice of a bird** - Awake early because we can't sleep.
- **The daughters of musick shall be brought low** – Hard of hearing.
- **They shall be afraid** - Terrified of falling, tripping over rugs, electrical cords, and fear of slipping in the shower. When asked at the VA Hospital if I've fallen recently, I say that I fell for a nurse on the fourth floor.
- **The almond tree shall flourish** - Hair turns white like an almond blossom. Sometimes it just turns loose.
- **The grasshopper shall be a burden** - Drag yourself about with a cane, walker, or wheelchair like a grasshopper at the end of summer.
- **Desire shall fail** - Loss of appetite for all things, even for life itself.
- **Man goeth to his long home** - Death, the eternal home.

All of these things are a sure sign that the end is approaching. A wise man sees trouble coming and prepares for it! We bought our house before the builders had finished it and eventually moved into a new house where everything worked perfectly. Over the years we have had to maintain it, or it would have fallen down around us. Spider webs, dirt and dust will overtake you if you don't do a little cleaning. We have had to replace the air and heat unit, garbage disposal, hot water tank, garage door motor and dish washer, repaint the walls, and change the light fixtures. Springtime will require cutting the grass each week, pressure washing the siding and white fence, gutter cleaning, and the painting of the eaves. The house is what we live in, and it must be maintained. No matter what we do to keep it standing, there will come a time when it resembles the ruins of Rome, or disappears from the earth completely. Likewise, the body houses the soul, and we try to maintain it the best way we can. We get an annual

physical, exercise, try to eat a healthy diet, and take enough vitamins and minerals to supply your local drug store. We will disguise the bodily corruption by taking a shower with bath gel or bar soap, we use deodorant, brush our teeth, use mouthwash and slap on a little cologne for good measure. The ladies will look for additives like collagen and retinol in their makeup. Someone said, "An old barn can always use a good coat of paint." Try our best to preserve our old bodies, they will eventually wear out and disappear from the face of the earth.

Verse six describes death coming to all people. **"... because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."** The body houses the soul like a cocoon and will return to the ground. It is all that will sleep in the grave! The soul emerges as a butterfly and returns to God.

Why must we all die? We die because; **"Wherefore, as by one man (the First Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"** Romans 5:12. **"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them (everyone, under every dispensation; you and me) that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him (the Second Adam, Christ) that was to come."** Romans 5:14. **"Therefore as by the offence of one (Adam) judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (Christ) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."** Romans 5:18. **"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."** Romans 6:23.

Let's face it. No matter what we do, our bodies shall someday fail, and our houses will eventually fall down. Only the spiritual preparation of the soul will endure throughout eternity. The sad news, in an instance of faith; suddenly becomes good news! All else is **"...Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."**

Carly Simon sang, "You're so vain; I'll bet you think this song was about you!" Actually, it's about all of us!

Semper Fi

Chaplain Ron