

**Articles and Sermons :: How Long Should We Live On Earth? by Zac Poonen****How Long Should We Live On Earth? by Zac Poonen - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2009/3/18 22:53****How Long Should We Live On Earth?***by Zac Poonen*

Our calling under the new covenant is not to live long on earth but to complete the task God has assigned us before we leave. It is possible for a wholehearted brother to finish in 35 years what another good brother would take 70 years to complete. Even where the ground is good, the harvest can still vary— in some cases there is a 30-fold crop, in a few a 60-fold crop, and in still fewer cases a 100-fold crop (Mark 4:8). That depends on how wholehearted and disciplined we are in our lives. Jesus took only 33½ years of ministry to finish His earthly ministry.

We glorify God not by living long but by completing the task assigned to us (See John 17:4). It is the QUALITY of our life (fulfilling all the will of God) that is important under the new covenant, and not the LENGTH of our life, as it was in the old (Psa.91:16).

Some have misunderstood the words of Moses in Psalm 90:10 and assumed that God has ordained 70 to 80 years for man to live. But Moses wrote that psalm in the wilderness and saw men who were supposed to live for much longer (even 120 years like himself) being cut down in their prime (at the age of 70 to 80), because of God's judgment on their unbelief in not entering Canaan (read v.10 to 12 together).

Some have also misunderstood God's word in Noah's time in Genesis 6:3 as though it meant that man's lifespan would be 120 years. But Abraham and others lived for much longer than 120 years. What God was saying there was that He would give man 120 more years to repent. So Noah preached for 120 years and had 120 years to build the ark.

God planned the exact number of our days on earth before we were born (See Psa.139:16)— and He has promised to ensure that we live out the full number of our days (Exod.23:26). Neither Satan nor any man can shorten our lives, if we seek to do the will of God alone in our lives. But we can shorten that time ourselves - by living in sin after we are born again, or by our carelessness and foolishness, and by disobeying God's laws for our physical body (overeating, bad eating habits, lack of exercise, laziness etc.). Sadly, we can also lengthen our days on earth (almost indefinitely nowadays) by using modern medical machines (like a heart-lung machine). But the best for us is to live the EXACT number of days God designed for us - whether long or short— and to accept that joyfully. Jesus died at 33½, James at about 33 and Paul at 67, while John lived beyond 95. David Brainerd died at 29 while his contemporary John Wesley lived up to 88. God's will for each of His children is different.

It is foolish therefore to do what Hezekiah did— he wept and prayed that God would extend his life, when God had already told him that his time on earth was over (Isa.38:1-5). However, God gave in to Hezekiah's prayers and granted him 15 more years on earth. See the sad result in Hezekiah's case. In those extra 15 years that he lived, he produced a son (Manasseh) who went on to become the worst of Judah's kings (2 Chron.33:1,2).

How different it was with Paul. When the Lord told him that his time on earth was over, he never asked for any extension. Paul had initially hoped that he would be alive until the coming of the Lord (See 1 Thess 4:15, where he includes himself among those who will be raptured - "WE who are alive..."). But the Lord told him when he was 67 years old, that he had reached the end of his earthly course (2 Tim.4:6,7) - and Paul gladly accepted God's will. Peter did the same, when he knew his time had come (2 Pet.1:14).

However, since none of us know the length of days written for us in God's book, it is perfectly proper for us to pray that we will live a long life and to pray that for others as well— only so that we can serve the Lord for a longer time on earth. Paul said, "If I live on in the flesh, that will mean fruitful labor for me; but I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress." (Phil.1:22-25).

There are great needs everywhere in the Lord's vineyard, and there are few who proclaim the whole counsel of God fearlessly. "Godly men are fast disappearing. Where in all the world can dependable men be found?" (Psalm 12:1). Wherever we do not know the will of God, we can pray for anything that seems right to us, provided we conclude our prayers with "Nevertheless not my will but Thine be done". Amen.

**Re: How Long Should We Live On Earth? by Zac Poonen - posted by adamdawkins, on: 2009/3/19 14:02**

Woah, this is challenging.

Nice and short, but to the very powerful point. This is where God has me at the moment. He's penetrating the worldly principles that still form part of the foundations of my thinking without realising.

I'm reminded of the start of John Wesley's journal on his way to Georgia when he woke up in a storm:

Quote:  
-----About eleven I lay down in the great cabin and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die. Oh, how pure in heart must he be, who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment's warning!  
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