INTRODUCTION

Growing old and aging is a process that begins with life and continues throughout the life cycle — it represents the closing period of the lifespan. Psychological and sociological factors seem to have a significant influence on how well individuals age. Aging research demonstrates a positive correlation of someone’s religious beliefs, social relationships, perceived health, self-efficacy, socioeconomic status and coping skills, with their ability to age more successfully. Depression is a prominent condition that has a significant impact upon the quality of life for older people — essentially, depression is a morbid sadness, dejection, or melancholy. Studies have demonstrated that the prevalence of depressive symptoms increases with age as a result of increased difficulties with the activities of daily living; as such it tends to affect one’s functional health as well as one’s longevity. Depression that surfaces later in life is often associated with physical health problems — older people in good health generally have a low risk of depression; so physical health is indeed the most prominent cause of depression late in life. The psychological effects of living with certain health problems, chronic pain, disability, and social restrictions frequently results in isolation and loneliness.

The issue of Loneliness is a negative feeling related to deficient social relations, and is one of the main factors that leads to depression. Many people experience loneliness either as a result of living alone, a lack of close family ties, reduced connects with their culture of origin, or an inability to actively participate in local community activities. The death of one’s spouse and friends, and social disengagement after leaving work or a familiar neighborhood, are some of the ubiquitous life-changing events contributing to loneliness in older people. Thus “social factors” play an important role in protecting people from psychological distress and in enhancing well-being; reduced quantity or quality of social relations are all associated with increased depressive symptom levels. Social isolation is a major risk factor for functional difficulties in older persons. Loss of important relationships can lead to feelings of emptiness and depression, whereas persons involved with a positive relationship tend to be less affected by everyday problems and challenges — those without relationships often become isolated, ignored, and depressed; conversely, those caught in poor relationships tend to develop and maintain negative perceptions of self, and find life less satisfying. Obviously as people grow older, they not only lose their friendship networks, but find it more difficult to initiate new friendships and belong to new networks. Therefore, as individuals grow older, they are faced with numerous physical, psychological, and social role changes that challenge their sense of self and capacity to live happily. Depression & Loneliness are considered
to be two of the more prominent problems leading to impaired quality of life among elderly people. At the same time, old age can also be an opportunity for making new friends, developing new interests, discovering fresh ways of service, and spending more time in fellowship with God. So aging can not only be an empty and sad experience, it can be a happy and winsome one, depending largely on the faith and grace experienced by the person involved.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON AGING

The Alexandrian theologian and one of the Greek Fathers of the church, Origen (185-254 AD), was a student of Clement of Alexandria (the first known Christian scholar)... in his Homilies on Numbers, he identified the qualities of old age as being the purity of the heart... the sincerity of the soul... and the superior understanding of things. Likewise, the great Roman orator in the first century BC, Cicero, said in his famous book on old age, that growing old was not something to be lamented; rather it was to be consoling and encouraging. He saw older people as a source of great wisdom. The great shortcomings of getting old (i.e., experiencing a diminished active life, frail body, suspended pleasures, and approaching death), actually confer certain advantages upon those who know how to enjoy the benefits of a contemplative life that is open toward other pleasures and other types of activity. One of the truly great qualities Christianity gives to its followers is the emphasis it places on transcendence rather than that which is earthly — for an old person, today ceases to be a glorious culmination of yesterday; instead it becomes the inaugural moment of an otherworldly tomorrow... so rather than adapting to contingent limits, it becomes a time of waiting and hoping. The old believer knows that the end of the road is the beginning of the ultimate for which he was created: “the paradise of God.” So old age for us as believers is the spiritual technique of waiting actively, confidently, and patiently for the blissful goal. Only old believers wait for something other than another age — they wait for another state, another life. Thus the old person is simultaneously on two different planes: here and beyond... now and the future... earth and heaven. This is the virtue of old age for the believer.

When lived well, the believer in his old age rethinks everything — including his fallenness... the deficiencies of the fallen world in which he has lived... as well as the reality of death, loneliness, and being an outsider — thus there are new issues to reflect upon, and new ways to reassess one's self. The moment itself becomes more important than its passing. Though old age can be the age of disease and loss, it can also be the age of wisdom and reconciliation. The word “old” in Gothic, Old Norse & Old English refers to something that is fully nourished, grown up, and mature. The old person knows the ways of the world because they are old; they share the same state of being. Origin, in his Homilies on Joshua says, “In Scripture, the word ‘old’ or ‘old man’ is not attributed by virtue to old age, but in order to honor a mature judgment and a life full of gravity, especially when one adds to ‘old’ the expression ‘full of days’.” John Chrysostom says,
“Grey hair is indicative of purity and wisdom only if it is first indicative of the inner self.” Likewise, Augustine says, “Old age is not perfect in and of itself, but only if it equates to wisdom which, in turn, does not necessarily depend on physical age.” So old age is not in and of itself a form of paradise… that would be illusory; one cannot see decrepitude as being a blessing. The upside of aging is lifelong learning; the aging brain should have the capacity to apply its wisdom to solving difficult problems.

Ecclesiastes 12 is as true today as when King Solomon wrote it about 3,000 years ago. In it he says, “Your body will grow feeble, your teeth will decay, and your eyesight will fail… the noisy grinding of grain will be shut out by your deaf ears… you will be afraid to climb up a hill… your hair will turn as white as almond blossoms… you will feel life-less and drag along like an old grasshopper… your appetite will be gone… then you will go to your eternal home, and people will go to your funeral” (Ec 12:3-5). The human body was never designed to live forever, and we all will advance through these stages as we proceed toward the end of our lives. All of these factors and more mean that, in order to age with grace and dignity, we need to have realistic expectations of ourselves. We will need to gradually curtail heavy physical activities and will have to be more careful driving after dark, or perhaps giving up driving altogether. God designed our bodies to age, yet with age comes wisdom and a new level of understanding, and that is all promul-gated by the difficulties of life; they don’t just happen for no purpose. Without experiencing challenging issues at some level, we would never draw closer to God and come to know the dynamic truths of Scripture; conversely, the more we study the Word, the deeper our understanding will be. The goal of a long life is to reach a higher level of maturity — the aged absorb life’s blows and wounds for that very reason. The reality is, the hard edges of a personality can soften… hot tempers can cool… patience can grow… and the foolishness of youth can be replaced by the wisdom of years.

Old age has a number of disconcerting aspects: an aging body that is more susceptible to illness, declining strength, feelings of uselessness, the loss of friends and love ones through death, the reality of one’s own death drawing nearer… loneliness, feelings of alienation from one’s children and grandchildren (who are busy with other interests and pursuits), and very often, financial concerns due to dwindling income. Sadly, our culture here in America does not esteem the elderly — we live in an extremely self-centered society… the younger generation often views the elderly as a financial burden… should the elderly require care, the younger generation sees it as an interference in their pursuit of pleasure; such has resulted in several states passing laws that enable family members to assist the terminally ill in suicide. By contrast the culture of China views old age as the most respected stage of life: most of the elderly in China are cared for in the family context — in the late 1970s there was only “one home” for the aged in Shanghai, which is the largest city in the world. Such, speaks volumes to our shame as a nation.

The ancient Greeks valued the wisdom of its elderly citizens — in the 7th century BC (between the time of Isaiah & Jeremiah) they set up a counsel of 28 men and two kings
(it was called the Gerousia) who were all over the age of sixty to control the city-state and manage community affairs. In the 4th century BC the Greek Physician Hippocrates (known as the Father of Medicine) developed a theory of aging positing that each individual has a finite quantity of innate heat or vital force; i.e., he identified life in the body as being “innate heat” — when there is heat there is life, when heat is gone there is death. He believed the reserve of heat in the body diminishes until death, and that the manifestations of aging are the result of this loss. In the 3rd century BC Aristotle expounded a theory of aging and death in his book “On Youth and Old Age, and on Life and Death.” In it he builds on Hippocrates’ view of heat as an essential quality of life. According to Aristotle everything that lives has a soul whose seat is in the heart and which cannot exist without natural heat (that which is required to keep the body alive). Just as fire can run out of fuel… innate heat also can be extinguished or exhausted; as the fuel is used up the flame diminishes as in old age; likewise, when the fuel is exhausted the person dies of old age. Galen, a Roman physician who lived about 200 AD, saw the body as the instrument of the soul — he said that the soul was maintained in the body by its innate heat… that over the course of life we gradually dehydrate, and we experience a gradual loss of function and vitality. The drying causes us to become thinner and more wrinkled and our limbs to become weaker & unsteady in their movements… that his condition of old age is the innate destiny of every mortal creature… when at last the dryness is complete, the body’s vital heat is extinguished. Galen’s theory has been the authoritative influence on medical thought and practice since the third century.

THE UPSIDE AND DOWNSIDE OF AGING

The Negative Side of aging is this — about one-of-four adults over the age of 65 experience some memory loss… about one-of-five say they have a serious illness or often feel sad or depressed… about one-of-six say they are lonely… about one-of-seven cannot drive… about one-of-ten say they feel they aren’t needed or that they are a burden to others. Troubles associated with aging accelerates as adults advance into their 80s and beyond. For instance, 41% of people over the age of 85 experience some memory loss, compared to 27% of those between the ages of 75-84, and 20% of those between 65-74. Similarly, 30% of people over the age of 85 often feel sad or depressed, compared with 20% of those between the ages of 65-84. In addition to that, 25% of those over the age of 85 no longer drive, compared with 17% of those between 75-84. Obviously as one grows older, he begins to experience a decline in both his mental and physical capacities; for some it happens more quickly than for others.

The Positive Side of aging is this — regarding the benefits of growing old, seven out of ten adults over the age of 65 say they are enjoying more time with their family… more time for hobbies… more financial security… and not having to work. About six out of ten adults say they get more respect and feel less stress than when they were younger. Five out of ten adults cite more time to travel and do volunteer work — thus many adults
refer to the older years as “the golden years.” Of all the good things about getting old, the best by far is being able to spend more time with family members — 28% of adults over the age of 65 say what they value most about being older is the chance to spend more time with family, and an additional 25% say that above all, they value time with their grandchildren. By the way, religion is a far bigger part of the lives of older adults than younger adults; seven out of ten adults over the age of 65 say religion is very important to them, compared with five out of ten adults between 30-49, and just four out of ten adults between 18-29… incidentally, one third of adults over the age of 65 say religion has grown more important to them over the course of their lives; whereas just 4% say it has become less important. Regarding all of the numbers above with regard to the importance of religion in peoples lives, it should be noted, there has been a significant decline in church attendance here in America over the past fifty years, so that obviously contributes in some way to the percentage of people who value religion in our country. In addition to the foregoing, among those over the age of 65 who suffer from some illness or feel sad, 43% of them say that religion has become more important to them. Obviously, growing old is a very “sober reality.”

**BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON AGING**

The Bible not only presents growing old as a normal, natural part of life, but that there is honor involved in growing old because it is generally accompanied by increased wisdom. Wrote Solomon, “A gray head is a crown of glory; it is found in the way of righteousness” (Prv 16:31). “The glory of young men is their strength, and the honor of old men is their gray hair” (Prv 20:29). The message is this: old age becomes a crown of glory to those who walk in righteousness; such is simply the great reward for having pursued wisdom in life. Remember, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (cf. Prv 9:10; 15:33; 1:7; Ecc 12:13). Those who seek God and wisdom find it (cf. Deut 4:29; Jer 29:11-14; 1 Chrn 28:9; 2 Chrn 15:2; Prv 2:4-6; 8:17; 28:5; Ps 14:2; 34:10; 119:2). If there is anything life (God) teaches us, it is that life is short and that the beauty of youth is soon gone (cf. Jam 4:14; Prv 31:30; 1 Pet 1:24) — only the aged sees how quickly life comes and goes… such learning is a very sober reality; by the way, there are some things that only time can teach us, and time goes by exceedingly fast. The truth is, you young bucks have no idea how sobering old age can be… you can't know it until you experience it.

Ultimately, the issue of growing old cannot be separated from the essence of what life is all about. Scripture frequently refers to God as “the living God” (cf. Deut 5:26; Ps 84:2; Rom 9:26) — “as the living God He gives all men life and breath and everything else” (cf. Acts 17:25; Gen 2:7; Jn 3:27; 1 Cor 4:7); every aspect of life has its source in God. With that in mind, everything God does has a purpose (cf. Is 14:24; 46:9-10; Eph 1:11), and the purpose is that “we fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecc 12:13) — to fear God is to esteem Him for who He really is (the Eternal One), and serve Him in purity of action. So what is the goal of living? It is to have a relationship with God and live life to the praise of
His glory (cf. Mt 22:36-40; 1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17). Though we are born with a natural tendency to “live for the moment,” the futility of doing so is strongly addressed in the first seven chapters of Ecclesiastes. As people grow older they increasingly feel the impact of their mortality; as such, they are more inclined to invest their time and resources in things that hold more promise of lasting meaning in life; some even do so for the sake of the legacy they leave (cf. Ecc 2) — unfortunately, one cannot predict what it is that has lasting value and significance (cf. Ecc 3:1-15), and this normally leads to varying levels of disillusionment & despair over life’s brevity and all the injustice that is done “under the sun” (i.e., in our temporal world – cf. Ecc 3:16-7:29).

When one comes to the realization that the common goals that most people have in life are pretty much meaningless, one would be wise to follow Solomon’s advice and “grow wiser in the use of all God allotted to him before he dies” (cf. Ecc 8:12; Ps 90:12; 1 Cor 4:2). Obviously the idea of accountability is a sobering one… it should cause us to give careful consideration to the way in which we live (cf. Mt 21:28-32; 25:1-46; Lk 16:1-13). The reality is, we need a divine perspective on life if we are going to live life the way God intended. Due to the fact life often contains a number of vexing problems, we must determine to see things from God’s perspective, or our faith will run amuck. Due to the disillusionment of our human condition, our universal depravity, uncertainty, and mortality, it is wise to remember “there is an eternal hope for the believer” — though we shall die, our death is but the beginning of the glorious life to which we have been called; the unbeliever knows nothing of such a life, and never again after he dies will be share in anything that is done under the sun (cf. Ecc 9:4-6). The unbeliever simply satisfies himself with the old maxim, “Life is hard, and then you die.” Knowing that we are accountable to God for all He has endowed to us, we ought to take joyful advantage of all our gifts, talents, wisdom, and opportunities in life sooner rather than later; i.e., before all opportunity to do so has ceased; before inevitable debilitation forecloses all opportunity (cf. Ecc 9:7-10; 11:9-12:7). The message of Ecclesiastes is this: “meaning in life is fulfilled in our God-given purpose, and that is only fulfilled when we take advantage of what God has given to us in Christ.” Life’s meaning will not be fully consummated until the final judgment when we shall receive our inheritance for the way we used all God endowed us with and entrusted to us (cf. Ecc 7:11; 12:14; also Mt 5:11-12; 25:34; Mk 9:41; Lk 6:22-23, 35; 1 Cor 3:8, 12-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Eph 1:11, 14, 18; Col 3:24). On that day we will see God as eminently fair in His rewards, regardless of how unevenly distributed our portion may seem in this present life.

Remember the words of Scripture: “It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment” (cf. Heb 9:27; Gen 2:17; 3:19; Rom 6:23). Death is inevitable for all of us; none of us have the authority to prevent it; it is as certain as the sun shining (cf. Ecc 3:2; 8:8). As the psalmist said, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones” (cf. Ps 116:15); because “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8); thus fulfilling the eternal plan of God: “He sent His Son to this world to die for us that we might spend eternity with Him in glory” (cf. Mt 25:31-40; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 5:4, 10). To be with God is “to be in the paradise of God” (cf. Lk 23:43; Rev 2:7) where suffering no longer exists
(cf. Rev 21:4). Other than everything we experience in this temporal world, the only thing that awaits us before we enter into heaven is “the judgment seat of Christ” (the final work of God that precipitates our entrance into the glory of heaven and God’s eternal presence—cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Mt 16:27; Rom 14:10-12; 1 Cor 3:12-15; Eph 6:8). God’s word to us as His children is that we “be faithful until death,” for it is then that we shall “receive the crown of life” (cf. Rev 2:10; 3:11-13; Jam 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4).

THE PROCESS OF AGING

When our parents gave birth to us, we were essentially born with a “blank book” up in our heads… the pages of thought were only starting to be filled. God gave us minds that have the ability to “logically process things,” so we might understand them. The mind is so complex, the world of science has only been able to scratch the surface of it; its depth transcends human understanding. The reality is, we have minds we don’t even understand — how’s that for an oxymoron! Our learning actually takes place on two levels: there is a divine level and a human level. According to Scripture, “God has written His Law upon our hearts, thus our conscience alternately accuses us or defends us” (cf. Rom 2:15). Man has been given a “free will” with which he can either embrace the truth of what God has placed in his heart, or he can suppress the truth in unrighteousness (cf. Rom 1:18). Thus, deep down in the recesses of our minds, we all know what is right and what is wrong, because “God has made it evident to us” (Rom 1:19). Awareness of wrongdoing was evidenced to the very first human family (cf. Gen 3:7-8). Scripture also tells us that David manifested a sensitive conscience (cf. 1 Sam 24:5; Ps 32:3-4; 51:3). So our conscience not only condemns us, but approves us (cf. Acts 23:1; Rom 2:15; 9:1; 14:22; 1 Cor 4:4; 2 Cor 1:12; 4:2; 5:11; 1 Jn 3:19-21). Aside from God’s divine input into our hearts and minds, there is the human input — God not only places divine norms in our hearts, but we learn things in the world through observation, experience, education, relationships (parents, siblings, friends), and the societal culture in which we live… obviously “life” is an incredible teacher.

I find it interesting that we entered into this world being totally dependent on others… and over time our dependency lessened and we ultimately became totally independent. And then as life’s door started closing on us, we again started becoming dependent on others; for some this dependency is absolute. I guess the questions we need to ask ourselves are these: “How did we handle our independence?” “How self-centered did we become?” “How did we use everything God entrusted to us?” “How significant was serving others in this life as opposed to simply living for ourselves?” “How influential was God’s input on our lives?” “How did we impact our world for good and make it a better place?” The reality is, sinful, fallen man insists on being an autonomous creature; i.e., he insists on governing his own life and not being in submission to someone else — not even God; in so doing, he lives for himself and the praise of his own glory. Living a life of personal autonomy is our greatest enemy, yet it is the most common way for human beings to live life. During our younger years we were obsessed and preoccupied
with all that is going on in our lives... we were learning things from one end of the spectrum to the other... as we entered into the adult years, we started focusing on building our own little utopia and enjoying all of the perks that accompanied it. Ultimately, however, there comes a time in life when we start seeing things in a different light (that is one of the beauties of growing old)... much of what we had learned earlier in life no longer seemed to correspond with what we are now learning later in life — this world obviously isn't the glorious little world we thought it was, or had been led to believe... and reality wasn't quite what we thought it was. Just when we expected the sun to shine brightly in our little world, clouds began to dominate the skies; again, life wasn't at all what we thought it was.

As one grows older in his faith, he starts seeing reality differently... no longer is it as humanistically-oriented, or as simplistic as he thought it was...even the spiritual realities that he had come to believe in life take on a little different perspective; as such, he then learns to contemplate reality on a deeper level, because life becomes a far more sober reality. It is at this point on life's journey where the believer starts rethinking all he had learned in life, and starts comparing his old thinking with the teachings of Scripture. It should be obvious to us as believers that there is a reason why things happen the way they happen in life... it is not mere happenstance that we go through all the things we go through; that is not at all what Scripture teaches. God has purpose for everything He subjects us to in life (cf. Ps 139:13-16; 66:8; Ecc 11:5; Is 44:24-28; Job 14:1-22). As mentioned earlier, we begin life knowing nothing... and then we experience a myriad of issues by which we start writing our little book on life... and then as we start approaching the end of life, God lets us experience the more profound difficulties of life, and it is these perplexing issues that cause us to rethink everything we had come to believe. It is the sober realities that we go through on the back end of life that cause us to give serious consideration to what life is really all about. In short, God wants His people to draw near to Him and reflect upon the life He gave them, and how they lived it... and prayerfully rethink and reassess everything through His Word.

When we immerse ourselves in the Word and truly begin to think biblically, we will emerge with some perspectives that will help us through all of the various quagmires of life. It is by contemplating the truths of Scripture that we slowly learn to give up on the things and values of this world, and begin to embrace the eternal values of God; as believers, we can lose the self-focus that seems to be the default of our culture, and focus more on the Lord. Much of the fear and worry associated with the end of life is an inordinate focus on self — focusing on Christ diminishes that fear. The truth is, the pain, suffering, and dementia we experience is all under God’s sovereign control, and will ultimately be used to accomplish His glory. If we believe that God is able to deal with all of the situations we go through in life, and that He loves us unconditionally (cf. Ps 62:11-12; 136:1-26; Heb 13:5), we are forced to conclude that His purposes transcend human understanding (cf. Is 46:9-10; 55:8-9; Jer 32:17). God’s purposes must be seen from an eternal perspective, not a temporal one. He is using all of the difficulties
of life to discipline us and transform us into His image — though that is a difficult construct for us to fully understand, that is the reality (cf. Jn 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 8:28-29; Eph 1:11; 3:11; Heb 12:4:11; 1 Pet 2:21; 5:10). Though Scripture presents death as an enemy, both Satan and death were defeated at the cross; as such, Christ can now use it to accomplish His purposes and His glory. Should God subject us to a disabled condition wherein we no longer are able to serve others (cf. Ps 1:21-28), we can still pray for others. As previously mentioned, death for the believer is not the end of life, rather it is the beginning of our eternal destiny to which God has ultimately called us. Since our true home is heaven, God will one day call us to that home, where we will fully enjoy the eternal glories of an infinitely great God who made us for Himself (cf. Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 2:10). As believers, we must learn help one another to live the last chapter of life on this planet to the glory of God... and not simply live it with serious misgivings and fear. Numerous times in Scripture God tells His people, “Do not fear or be afraid” (cf. Gen 26:24; Ex 14:13; 20:20; Deut 20:3; 31:8; Josh 11:6; Is 37:6; 41:10; 43:1; Jer 1:8; Mt 10:31; 14:27; Heb 13:6) — fear doesn’t change our conditions or our future, it simply produces undue worry (cf. Mt 6:25, 27, 34)... results in a self-focus (cf. Lk 12:16:22), breeds unwise decision-making (cf. Jam 4:13-14), and robs us of peace (cf. Phil 4:6-7).

Our Christian faith lets us see life as an incredible gift from God, and the human responsibility for the stewardship of that life. God not only uses life, but the dying process as well, to prepare us spiritually for life beyond the grave. One of the most reverent English writers down through the ages was the moralist and essayist Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) — here is what he had to say about the process of growing old: “Piety (i.e., humble reverence before our Creator) is the only proper and adequate relief of decaying man. He that grows old without [genuine] religious hopes, as he declines into imbecility, and feels pains and sorrows incessantly crowding upon him, falls into a gulf of bottomless misery, in which every reflection must plunge him deeper, and where he finds only new gradations of anguish and precipices of horror” (this was written in his work “The Rambler”). Following are a few other quotes on growing old made by individuals down through the centuries, some of which were the thoughts of unbelievers —

**SOME FAMOUS QUOTES ON GROWING OLD**

- Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, the last of life, for which the first was made: Our times are in His hand who said, “A whole I planned, youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!” — this poem was written by Elizabeth Browning (1806-1861) in her work “Rabbi ben Ezra.”

- The hope I dreamed of was but a dream; and now I wake, exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old — Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) in her work “Mirage.”

- Old age is the most unexpected of all the things that happen to a man — Lev Trotsky (1879-1940) in his work “Diary in Exile.”
• Old age brings along with its uglinesses the comfort that you will soon be out of it—
which ought to be a substantial relief to such discontented pendulums as we are.
To be out of the war, out of debt, out of the drouth, out of the blues, out of the
dentist's hands, out of the second thoughts, mortifications, and remorses that
inflit such twinges and shooting pains—out of the next winter, and the high
prices, and company below your ambition; surely these are soothing hints—
Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882).

• There was sun enough for laying upon beaches, there was fun enough for far into
the night. But I am dying now and done for, what on earth was all the fun for?
For I am old and ill and terrified and tight—Sir John Betjeman (1906-1990?) in
his work “Sun and Fun.”

• All the best days of life slip away from us poor mortals first; illnesses and dreary
old age and pain sneak up, and the fierceness of harsh death snatches away—
Virgil (70-19 BC) in his work “Eclogue.”

• Heaven is not only the absence of tears, sorrow, death, sin, darkness, frustration,
anxiety, pain, suffering, ungodly people, and the curse of Adam's sin… it is a
setting of perpetual eternal bliss, absolute peace, and the everlasting joy of com-

• When we give up trying to run our own life or when we give up what seems so
precious and so utterly indispensable to us, it is only then that we suddenly find
the true joy of being a Christian and enter into a life so freed from obsession that
we can hardly understand how it could have had such a hold on us—words by
James Montgomery Boice (1938-2000).