

HOW MUCH DIFFERENCE CAN ONE VERSE MAKE? - Part one

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HOW TO BECOME YOUNG AGAIN - Psalm 103:5 - "...who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

There is a wonderful logic in this short verse. It tells of a life that is kept young by the power of *inner satisfaction* rather than a *turning back of the clock*. There is no way, on this earth, to start counting back the years to twenty after you have already reached forty. The direction of our days never changes. In another famous phrase from the Psalms the writer tells us that a large part of living life wisely and righteously lies precisely in calculating the number of days we are likely to have left on this earth: Psalm 90:12 - "So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom."

But if the years can't be *turned back*, our text from Psalm 103 *does* tell us how to *keep our hearts from growing tired and old*. And this is a more common problem than many think. How many times have you heard said of someone, "My, he's certainly aged over this past year", or, "He seems to be growing old before his time." The common explanation for that in our culture has been the person is gradually or suddenly becoming the victim of *overwork* or *stress*. But I want to offer you an additional explanation for people growing old before their time. This explanation arises out of our text. And so does its remedy:

1) **THE ISSUE OF RENEWED YOUTH IS FOUND IN INNER SATISFACTION WITH GOD, NOT EASE OF CIRCUMSTANCE - Psalm 103:5** - "...who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

The Psalmist is quite clear. *Satisfaction* brings *rejuvenation*. This is how the heart is kept young. So we see, by contrast, how people grow old too soon. They *fail* to find their deepest satisfaction in God. Or, perhaps more accurately, they *try* to find true satisfaction in the wrong things.

Think carefully and deeply with me about this one principle for just a minute longer. It has the potential to realign and freshen your whole being in the Lord. The Psalmist had never been to a psychiatrist or therapist. He had never read the "One Minute Manager" or any other such advice. But he tells us all - all of us in this fast-paced world - that we're in danger of missing the most important thing we can know. *He tells us people don't wear out primarily from too much stress, but from too little nourishment.*

2) **HERE IS A SPIRITUAL LAW - PEOPLE WILL GROW OLD BEFORE THEIR TIME IF THEY CONFUSE PLEASURE WITH JOY**

This cuts to the heart of what is on the Psalmist's mind in our text. He calls us to find, not only *happiness*, or even *enjoyment* in God, but *satisfaction*. Satisfaction can *only* be found in God. And people can't find satisfaction in mere *pleasure*. They can only find *pleasure* in pleasure. They can tickle their physical senses temporarily, but they will never come and receive fullness at the banquet table of God. In fact, the Bible teaches *pleasure* is perhaps the biggest enemy of *satisfaction in God* (see Luke 14:16-20 and Isaiah 55:1-2).

3) **YOU MEASURE YOUR SATISFACTION IN GOD BY THE LOSS OF INTEREST IN ANYTHING ELSE AS THE SOURCE OF YOUR DEEPEST JOY**

The Psalmist doesn't promise a young heart to just anyone *interested* in God. He offers his advice to those who are *satisfied* in God. So the question naturally arises: How can I *know* if I am such a person? In spite of what I sing in church, how can I know I am finding this kind of *satisfying* relationship with God through Jesus Christ?

It's not a question to be skipped over lightly. And there *is* a way of diagnosing a correct answer, if you are honest and humble enough to search for it: John 6:35 - "Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

"*Shall not hunger - Shall never thirst.*" The truest level of where you are spiritually is found in *what satisfies your heart*. Jesus said He came to fill the life in such a way that He wasn't just *one* of the things bringing pleasure to the life, but He *satisfied* the life in such a way that there was no passionate hunger for *anything else* - "He who comes to me will not hunger - he who believes in Me will never thirst." For the one who comes to Jesus in true belief, competing hungers don't accumulate in the heart. This is *not*, as the world might think, because we have no interest in inward delight, but because we have found a deeper delight in the Lord than can be found anywhere else. The deepest hunger and the deepest thirst have found their rest in God.

4) **HOW CAN I TRAIN MY HEART TO BE SATISFIED IN GOD? - Psalm 103:5** - "...who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

"Pastor Don, here's my problem. I *would* be satisfied like the Psalmist if God were filling up my life with good things. But He isn't. I'm disappointed with the cards He's dealing to me. How can my soul be renewed in the middle of the mess my life is in? How can I possibly change my outlook when I don't see many good things coming from God right now?"

I think this is the question we all want answered at one time or another. And I think the Psalmist has an

answer. You will perhaps see it more clearly if we look at our verse for the day in its context: **Psalm 103:1-5** - “**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! [2] Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, [3] who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, [4] who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, [5] who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.**”

The question we’re asking in this fourth point is, “**how can I train my mind to be satisfied in God?**” And what I want you to see, as we wrap up this teaching, is this is exactly what the Psalmist is doing in these verses. He’s **training his mind** to be satisfied in God.

The renewing of your youth is tied to your memory. If we **forget the benefits** we will miss the **rejuvenation**. Look at the verbs leading up to verse five - “**Forgives (3).**” “**Heals (3).**” “**Redeems (4).**” “**Crowns (4).**” And “**Renews (5).**” Our minds are dreadfully weak when it comes to remembering **mercies**. Amazingly, the same people who can remember a wedding anniversary that rolls around 20 years after the wedding, or a birthday that only comes one day in 365, can’t concentrate on blessings regularly received from God’s hand.

I’ll tell you why this is so. What makes the anniversary rememberable (hopefully) is the fact that it doesn’t happen very often. But the Bible says God’s mercies are new **every morning**. The Bible says the steadfast love of the Lord **never ceases**. We never live a day without it. This is both a **blessing** and a **problem**. It’s a **blessing** because our lives have been redeemed from destruction and crowned with loving kindness. It’s a problem because **regular** blessings will always be **forgotten** blessings. This is why the Psalmist shows me how to **train my heart** to be satisfied in God. He’s says I must **remember** and **praise**.

Just take the joy of being pardoned all our iniquities. To be forgiven **one** transgression is a great relief. How much greater to be forgiven **all** - every wrong ever committed before a holy and just God! Remember the state of angels who sinned much like we, who are offered no pardon or forgiveness at all.

I wonder if any of those thoughts were in the Psalmist’s mind when, right in this very Psalm, he wrote these words: **Psalm 103:10-12** - “**He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. [11] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; [12] as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**”

Because this is the greatest blessing of all it should move our hearts. Yet, because we live with this divine provision every day, our hearts can grow as cold as stones toward it. This is how **spiritual old age** sets in.

Thoughtful, passionate praise renews spiritual youth. It removes heaviness: **Isaiah 61:3** - “**....to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.**”

These are the only pairs of existence offered. Your spirit must put on **praise** or settle for perpetual **faint-heartedness**. For your own soul’s sake, take very seriously every summons to worship. This kind of praise-filled responsiveness isn’t the binge of some over-emotional charismatic. Renew your soul’s youth in the daily richness of God’s goodness. Heed the Spirit’s summons to **remembrance**. Your youth depends on it.

Just this week I read these wonderful words from Spurgeon’s **Morning And Evening**. Here’s how you can trace this growth of being more and more satisfied in the good grace of God in your life:

“The important thing is not to get discouraged. Look for the growing signs of increased life. If you could indulge in sin, without fear of punishment, yet that very indulging in sin would be punishment in itself; if you could have the whole world, and live in it forever, yet that without God would be misery too great for your soul, then be of good courage because God is what you crave. With all your sins and imperfections, still be comforted knowing that if your soul has no rest in sin, you are not dead in sin. If you are still craving and crying for something better, then God has not forsaken you, because you have not forgotten Him.”

Live in the life renewing truth of this single verse from the Psalms this week: **Psalm 103:5** - “**....who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.**”