

ON OUR WAY, DAY BY DAY

by Dan Shipley

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). The "outward man" is simply the house of the inward man. Day by day that house is "decaying" and wasting away. Who, past forty, needs reminding? Nevertheless, with relentless rapping on the door of our minds come the messengers of aging; the hoary head, the stooped shoulders, the wrinkled skin, the dimmed vision, and all the other infirmities that won't let us forget what Paul says. All men know that much. But God's people know something else.

They know that just as surely as the outward man is decaying, the inward man is being renewed day by day. They know that for the faithful Christian, growing older means growing better. He is growing better because he is growing in the knowledge of God's word. As the newborn babe, he continually longs for the "spiritual milk which is without guile" (1 Pet. 2:2). As he grows in knowledge of the word, he also grows in the faith that is produced by the word (Rom. 10:17). As he grows in knowledge and faith, he also grows in usefulness to the cause of Christ. He is renewed in his determination to live closer to the Lord, to do what is right and oppose all wrong. In his spiritual growth, the aging Christian has learned that death is not the end, but merely a transition to something very far better. The happy anticipation of being in the Father's house makes leaving this worn out tabernacle a welcomed blessing!

That's why the apostle Paul saw death as gain. But death is gain only when living is for the Lord. Every living man knows that he will keep his appointment with death (Heb. 9:27). He should know that living for the Lord is living at its best because it is living that prepares for death. Though the outward man is perishing and bound for the dust, we nourish and cherish him; we spare no expense to care for him and tend to his needs. Will we neglect the needs of the inward man that we know will survive the grave? With every tick of the clock and every beat of the heart we are getting closer to the end of this life. The question is are we getting closer to heaven?