

Adventuring with God

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His Care In Every Season

I turned sixty-two this week, so I'm thinking about birthdays and other markers in life more than I usually do. It's a cliché, but it's true; life flies quickly by. And the speed seems to accelerate the older we get. A few years back I remember my mom telling me that, although her chronological age was somewhere in the late eighties, inside she felt sixteen. Isn't that amazing? She still had youthful aspirations and dreams about life even though her body was betraying her true age. Victor Hugo expressed a similar sentiment: "Winter is on my head, but spring is in my heart."

This week we begin another chapter in Mom's life journey. My brother and I are moving her into a memory care facility close to where I live, so she can have visitors and emotional support year round. My brother and I used to share this responsibility but it is getting too hard for her to be uprooted every six months. So it's time to get her permanently settled.

Up until three or four years ago, she was really independent; she shopped for her own groceries and cooked her own meals. She wrote her own checks, cleaned her own apartment, and did her own laundry. She walked across a busy parking lot anytime she wanted to buy something at the store, and she kept track of her appointments and social calendar. Sadly, none of that is possible now. So she must be where she can be supervised and helped every moment of the day and night.

I don't know which of us is sadder about the turn of events. Watching her gradual decline has been hard for all of her family members. Whether our grief is as intensive as hers is hard to assess. For her, the loss has been great indeed. Yet, we are all grateful that she has enjoyed good health and independence for as long as she has. I often joke with her that she must have shown special honor to her parents to have been blessed with such a long life. (She'll turn ninety-two this year.)

I read somewhere that old age is not for the fainthearted. It takes great courage to face each day being completely dependent upon others to meet your needs. If your caregivers choose to extend that help with grace and kindness, then you will be blessed. But if they extend it with impatience and a sharp tongue, you must take it; you have little recourse for change. That is easier for a child who has not known independence yet, but how much harder for those who once proudly met not only their own needs but also the needs of others around them. It takes both courage and humility to age well. I hope I can do it as well as my mom has when my turn comes!

It is a great comfort to know that Jesus remains the same in every changing circumstance of life. He is our faithful provider, comforter, encourager, sustainer, and healer, no matter where we are or what we face. Whatever our age or physical condition, the invitation is always open: "**Cast all your anxiety upon him; for he cares for you**" (1 Peter 5:7). I have been the grateful recipient of this blessing as I have walked through Mom's changing circumstances with her. As every expectant father can attest, it is sometimes harder to be the one who must watch the pain and difficulty than to be the one who is experiencing God's grace and help in the situation. We stand helplessly by and wish we could bear the pain with them or alleviate their stress in some way, but we cannot. So we watch anxiously to see how they will respond to their situation. It is impossible to just shrug off their suffering, as much as our flesh would desire to do so. We are emotionally bound up in the bundle of life with that person, and their distress causes us some distress too.

We all have to learn how to cast our burdens off on the Lord, whether they are burdens we are personally experiencing or burdens we share vicariously with another. God's grace fortunately is sufficient for all of it. We just have to learn how to trust Him and let Him be our burden-bearer. Jesus promises the best gift of all:

"I'll never leave you or forsake you" – "I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 28:20).

The apostle Paul knew the truth of God's sufficiency better than most of us because in his life it was put to some pretty severe tests. In every difficulty he faced because of proclaiming the gospel and representing the Lord Jesus, Paul found Him to be faithful and true. That's why he could declare so boldly in 2 Corinthians 4, "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (vv. 8-9). He knew that "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

I know that many more adjustments, challenges, and hard times await us. Then when Mom passes on to glory, Tony and I can look forward to facing similar things in our own lives. The progression of age marches on, and we are powerless to stop it. Yet we are not without hope or confidence in the One who is beyond age and time. He has been faithful every step of the way and I know He will still be faithful when our eyes dim and our steps falter. The Father of compassion and the God of all comfort will see to our needs

even into old age.

I need to remember that many good things come from the aging process. Through it I learn that I am vulnerable and I need the kindness and help of others. Hopefully that knowledge will enable me to extend mercy to others who are older or more vulnerable than I am. I also learn what is really important in life. This helps me to not waste my time on things that will not have an eternal impact on me or others. And finally, I learn the inexhaustible love and provision of my God. As my needs increase, He steps up to meet them out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. As Malcolm Muggeridge wrote, "One of the many pleasures of old age is to become ever more sharply aware of the many mercies and blessings God showers upon us."

We have much to be thankful for, no matter where we find ourselves in life's journey. We can rejoice that outside we may be wasting away but inwardly we are being renewed day by day. We can still feel sixteen even as we approach the age of retirement! Through all the changes to come I hope I can keep my courage up and keep my eyes fixed firmly on the Lord!

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home!

Under the shadow of Thy throne still may we dwell secure;
Sufficient is Thine arm alone, and our defense is sure.

A thousand ages in Thy sight are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come;
Be Thou our guide while life shall last, and our eternal home.

Isaac Watts (1714)