


*"The Outward and the Inward"*

Loved Ones, last month my Bible reading took me to Ecclesiastes 12. I was reading in the New Living Translation (NLT), and the verses really seemed to "get in my face."

*"Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and say, "Life is not pleasant anymore."*

*Remember him before the light of the sun, moon, and stars is dim to your old eyes, and rain clouds continually darken your sky.*

*Remember him before your legs—the guards of your house—start to tremble; and before your shoulders—the strong men—stoop. Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly.*

*Remember him before the door to life's opportunities is closed and the sound of work fades. Now you rise at the first chirping of the birds, but then all their sounds will grow faint.*

*Remember him before you become fearful of falling and worry about danger in the streets; before your hair turns white like an almond tree in bloom, and you drag along without energy like a dying grasshopper...."*

I read it once and thought, 'I don't remember that." I know I read this chapter at least once a year, so I read it a second time. What's this about trembling legs and stooped shoulders? Eyes, teeth and ears not working? Am I really becoming an almond tree in blossom!?

A DYING GRASSHOPPER?

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So, I read it a third time. But this time I read the passage to my wife. I asked Ramona to let me share part of my verses for the day. She listened reverently, looked at me and said, "Well, should we laugh or cry?"

I said "Both."

It was funny, but it was also weird that the verse seemed to apply to me, really TO ME, for the first time in my life! Verses 2, 3, 4 and 5 all begin the same way:

**"Remember Him."**

This passage is actually an encouragement to live your life in such a way that as you get older you have no regrets because you lived life well.

When my brother was approaching 80, more than once I heard him complain about limitations and frustrations – about unexplained falls and diminishing strength. His wife's response was beautiful: "We had our day. We had our day, and you are still my hero cowboy."

And I need to mention this. Before our morning was over, I also read 2 Corinthians 4:16. "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day."

What a day that will be, when my Jesus I shall see!

I love you,
**Pastor Stephen**
*Pastor Emeritus*