

Volume 4, Day 29: Elderly Spiritual Infants

I was visiting a large contemporary church a few years ago. Part of the service was dedicated to ‘showcasing’ spiritual maturity. The panel consisted of two elderly women who were interviewed by one of the pastors. One woman answered each question with a wisdom and insightfulness that compelled all to listen and learn. She obviously had memorized much scripture, knew Jesus well and loved Him dearly. The other woman was obviously spiritually ignorant. She lacked knowledge of scripture. And wisdom was obviously not in her. Yet both women had two things in common. One was old age. The other was relatively little evil being manifest in their lives. Consider this as well. If a glorious eulogy is given at an old woman’s funeral, it is likely to be believed and appreciated. If a similarly great eulogy is given at an old man’s funeral, it is highly likely that most of it will not be believed! And spiritual maturity is rarely even mentioned on such an occasion.

For some reason, we think that spiritual maturity comes with natural aging. This is like thinking that as rebellious young boy gets older, he will surely develop good behaviors. Yet, the truth be told, aging is a process of decay and decline and has little affect on behavior. So, why do we think that spiritual maturity accompanies aging? I believe that it comes from the false teaching that spiritual maturity is a matter of doing less evil and doing more kind deeds. Well, to be sure, most of us become less wicked when we get older, simply because our body cannot perform either rightfully or wrongfully in a particular activity (for example, sex). However, there is a correlation between less sinning and greater spiritual maturity. When one is truly in love with another they put the pleasure of the other ahead of their own. So, if one is spiritually mature, that is passionately in love with God, less selfishness and less relationally destructive behavior follow. Your behaviors either reveal your evil motives or confirm your pure ones. Spiritual maturity is selfless other-preferring expressions of unconditional love.

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan