

I'm 63 Today

Written by Bill Perkins

For the next 364 days when I take the platform at a speaking engagement, after an introduction, I'll sometimes say, "I'm 63 today." The audience will break out in applause, some will shout out a, "Happy Birthday," and who knows, a band may strike up the Happy Birthday song and everyone will join in singing to me. I'll then raise my hands to quiet the audience and say, "It's not my birthday, that's in March. But I am 63 today."

It's a pretty good joke and you're free to use it whenever you want. Of course, it will work best if you use your actual age rather than mine. But since today is my birthday I thought I'd share a few thoughts with you about what it's like having a higher number represent how long I've been on the earth.

First — Wisdom in an Aging Body

First, I like possessing the wisdom that comes with age but dislike living in an aging body. No way would I trade what I know now for what I knew when I was twenty. Nor would I trade the depth of my relationship with God. But I'm looking forward to the new body I'll one day receive from the Lord. If you know me, you also know I work hard to stay in shape and maintain a healthy weight.

But time has taken its toll and bad knees prevent me from running, water and downhill skiing, and chasing my wife around the house. That's why I took up scuba diving--it's easy on the body and allows me to experience the glory of God underwater. What I'm saying is--just because I can't do everything I once did doesn't mean I can't still have fun.

Second — the Brevity of Life

Second, I have a heightened awareness of the brevity of my life. While any of us could die at any moment, the tendency is to calculate our remaining days by the life expectancy of men in our country. Since the life expectancy for men in the USA is 77.6 years that means my window of life here on earth could close in 14.5 years. If you're 20, you'll be tempted to think you've got 57.6 years left to live.

The problem with such thinking is that it encourages us to think we've got more time than we may have. Psalm 90:2 tells us, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom." I don't think that means we should have a life-expectancy countdown clock. Rather, I think it means we should consider the value of every day and live it as if it was one of our last.

Third — My Greatest Days Are Ahead

Third, I believe my greatest days of life and ministry are before me. I realize I'm at an age when many men have retired or are thinking of doing so. For some, that means they kick back, play golf, and let the days and opportunities to impact lives for Christ, casually slip by.

I hope to remain in the battle and on the front line until I take my last breath. I hope to give younger men an example to follow and older men a challenge to match or exceed. I want to follow the exhortation of Paul to "Fight the good fight of faith" with the zeal of a young man and the wisdom of an old one--until the Lord calls me home.

Today, on my 63rd birthday, I commit myself to that cause. I hope you'll lock arms with me so that together we can see a great outpouring of God's transforming power in ourselves and those we influence.